

**'I need to tickle
the what?'**

We pop a 20-year-old novice
on a 1960s Triumph Trophy



**Rick rides the
Honda XLV750**

Brit bike expert finds exotic
V-twin is just too much fun...

Britain's biggest-selling
classic magazine

Classic Bike

NOVEMBER 2025
ISSUE #550 - £5.60

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first British twin**

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BSA's bargain A10

**Deafening pipes,
acres of tweed**

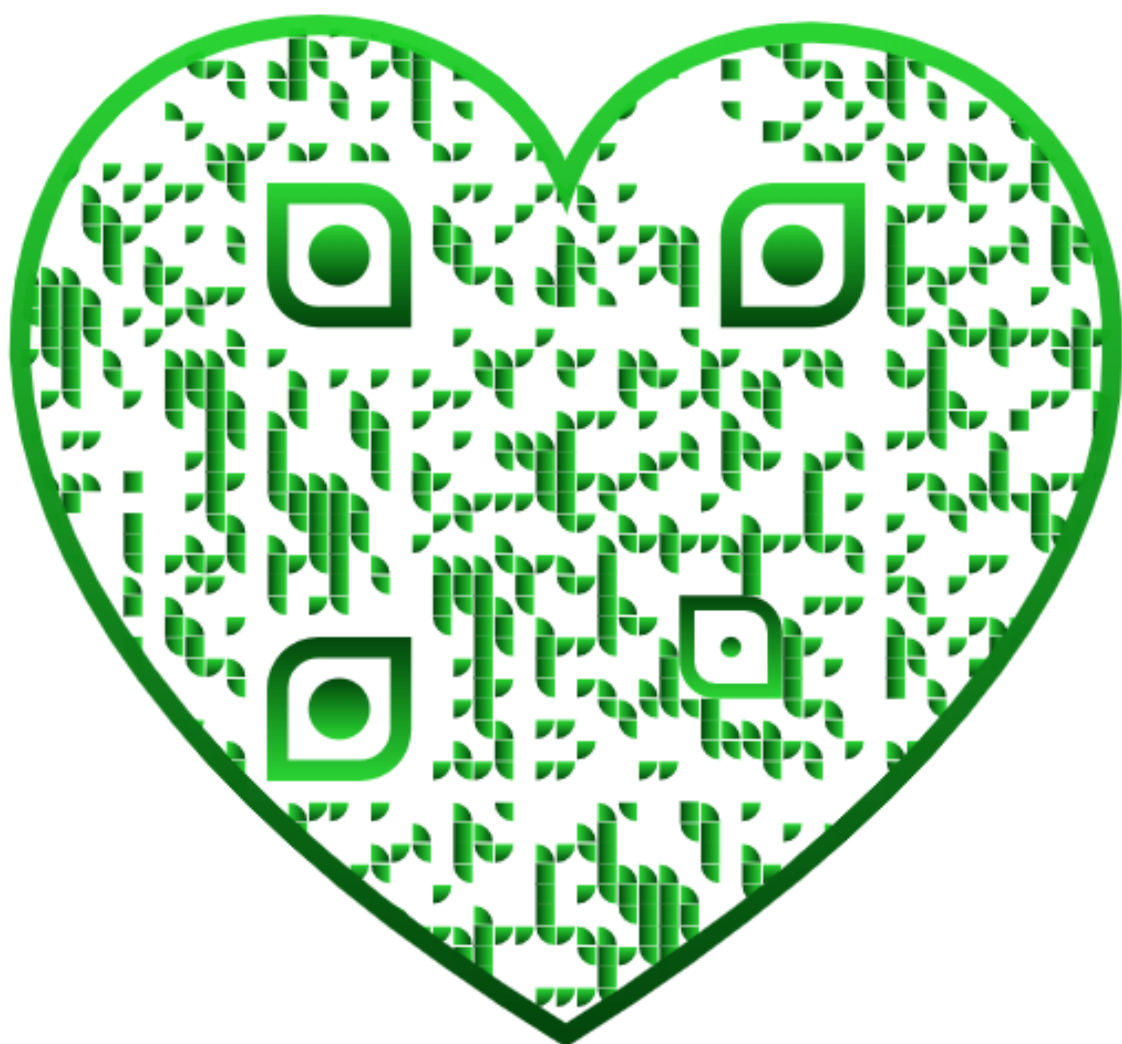
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ENQUIRIES

Bonhams Motorcycles
Milton Keynes (Head Office)
+44 (0) 20 8963 2817
motorcycles@bonhams.com

International Dept Director
+44 (0) 20 8963 2819
ben.walker@bonhams.com

Head of Department (UK)
+44 (0) 20 8963 2818
james.stensel@bonhams.com

Senior Specialist
+44 (0) 20 8963 2822
bill.to@bonhams.com

Specialist
+44 (0) 20 7468 8258
andrew.barrett@bonhams.com

Lancs, Yorks, Cheshire,
N. Counties & Scotland
+44 (0) 7811 899 905
mark.garside@bonhams.com

Midlands, Peak District & Wales
+44 (0) 7710 615 868
phil.ingle@bonhams.com

Lincs & East Anglia
+44 (0) 1507 481 890
David Hawtin

Leics, Northants, Herts, Beds,
Bucks & Oxon
+44 (0) 7973 661 051
martin.heckscher@bonhams.com

London, Berks, Kent, Surrey & Sussex
+44 (0) 7774 747 017
david.hancock@bonhams.com

Hampshire & Dorset
+44 (0) 1794 518 433
Mike Jackson

Devon, Cornwall &
The South West
+44 (0) 1872 250 170
jonathan.vickers@bonhams.com

@BonhamsBikes

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GARY MARGERUM



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Bruno Tagliaferri

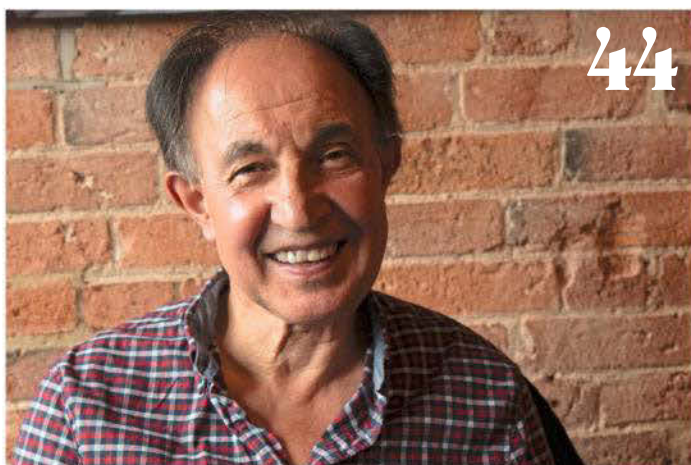
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Startline



November 1987, Macau Grand Prix

A tropical typhoon led to the bike action at the 1987 Macau Grand Prix being reduced to a single-leg 10-lap race. That turned out to be fortuitous for Ron Haslam, riding the hub-steered Elf Honda GP bike. Open Class rules meant he was up against 750cc and 1000cc superbikes, 500cc two-strokes from Honda, Yamaha and Suzuki, and a few GSX-R1100s.

On the Armco-lined 3.8-mile circuit, Ron (#4) led from the start, chased by Japanese factory Yamaha rider Norihiko Fujiwara (#28) on a YZR500 and German superbike racer Peter Rubatto (#3) on a Bimota YB4. Fujiwara, despite the cold and damp conditions, was pushing. "I saw his wheel a couple of times at the hairpin and reckoned he'd go down," Ron told *Motorcycle News*. "Next lap I heard a tell-tale scrape and knew I was clear." But taking the flag wasn't easy. "I felt the handlebar break five laps from the end and was praying she'd make it to the finish." He ended 13secs clear of Rubatto to claim a record-setting sixth win.

Pole position man Hiroyuki Kawasaki (#29) on a factory Yamaha YZR500 was third. The rest of the top ten included Kenny Irons (#8), Ray Swann (#2) Trevor Nation (#5) and Robert Dunlop (#27). Also in the picture is American racer John Ashmead (#1) who went on to win the 1989 Daytona 200 on a privateer Honda 750.



WERE YOU THERE?

Got a story about the Macau Grand Prix, or want to identify the rest of these riders? Let us know by emailing: letters@classicbike.co.uk

Letters

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Classic Bike, Media House, Peterborough Business Park, Lynch Wood, Peterborough, Cambs, PE2 6EA



Hello

Stood in the door to Rick Parkington's workshop, I don't know where to

look next. There's a Bradbury V-twin on the bench, overlooking a belt-drive single-speed Blackburne. The giblets of a Triumph TR6 engine fill a table, while mills, lathes, drills and presses jostle for bench space. Walls are covered with shelves and drawers stuffed with enticing tools, widgets and goodness knows what. There are wheels, frames, tanks... you get the idea. I've been gawping so long, my mug of tea has to be replaced with a hot one.

I left school at 16 to do an engineering apprenticeship, so have murky memories of machine tapers, knurling tools and slapped wrists for over-eager feed rates. But for my son Ed, it's an unseen world of curious delights. He slowly circles the workshop as Rick points out the very many highlights, his eyes wide, his hands caressing assorted metallic wonder. And they haven't even started on the bikes.

At 20 years old, Ed's world is all touch screens and apps, and his riding has all been on modern bikes. So we're here to see what a 21st-century youngster makes of classic bikes, with a ride on Rick's 1968 Triumph Trophy (once I manage to stop them nattering in the workshop). Find out what he thinks on page 38.

I don't have the space, time or skills to tackle grand projects like Rick does (his Triumph crank masterclass is on p85), but our visit gives me a much-needed boot up the backside to sort the exhausts on my Yamaha TDR250. And once in the garage, I don't know why I've been putting it off.

There's satisfaction in stealing a couple of hours to tinker and build relationships with our old bikes. It might not be to do a big job or something involved, but fixing head bearings, sorting a flapping chain guard or fitting a much-hunted part is still rewarding. You can read about the *CB* family's month of fettling on p90.

Plenty of other great reads in this issue as well. There are revealing stories about Triumph's Hinckley rebirth from factory insider Bruno Tagliaferri (p44). Rick rides the forebear of the Africa Twin, Honda's rare and exotic XLV750R (p58), there's a collection of moped brilliance from our archive (p68), plus we have an exclusive spin on a Kenny Roberts replica Yamaha RD500 (p30). The fabulous bespoke build is a glorious demonstration of what's possible with a little passion and vision. Actually, no - with a huge amount of both.

Oh, and there's also an in-depth guide to BSA's bargain A10 (p53). I'm not going to let Ed read it, otherwise I think the Bank of Dad might be called into action.

I hope you enjoy the issue.

Mike Armitage, Editor

Generation rap

As a seasoned owner and rider of Triumph twins, it's sad to see the disarray in the markets for so-called classic motorcycles. The younger generation seem only interested in brown three-quarter length trousers and canvas shoes whilst riding an electric scooter. This is somewhat disappointing in itself, but the motorcycle press - especially for the more classic style of motorcycle - seems to turn a blind eye to this trendy 20-something age group and keep peddling the same old stuff to those who already have (or are too old to buy and enjoy) a decent classic motorcycle.

Would it be too much for the motorcycle press to change tactics? Instead of showing some old bloke in blue overalls standing next to an old Norton single, actually show some younger people riding and enjoying a classic motorcycle. Time is short, I fear - the classic motorcycle lifestyle needs an injection of youthfulness. This could only bring the market up, to make it more interesting to our younger generation and, dare I say it, put the cool back into riding a motorcycle.

Gary Austin

Funnily enough, we've had a few thoughts along similar lines ourselves. Have a peek at page 38. Mike

Tiger hunt

I'm a music journalist and author, currently working on my next book about the band Prefab Sprout. For one



Do you own the Triumph Tiger on this album cover?

Contributors in this issue



Jim Moore

Two-stroke buff, sports bike fan, ex-*Performance Bikes* staffer, Jim was the perfect person to get the story on - and to ride - this Roberts rep.

Pages 30-36



Ed Armitage

What does a modern young person *really* think of a classic bike? We perched Ed on a trad British twin and asked him to write about his experience.

Pages 38-43



Hugo Wilson

Nobody is better at finding rarities and unearthing the long-forgotten images from the dusty *CB* archive. This month's haul is fabulous.

Pages 68-73



Thrills and no frills on the hills

Great to see all the fabulously random two-stroke specials in the September issue, especially the TDRG built by Pat Sefton and raced in hillclimbs. Such events were brought to our attention in the 1980s by *Performance Bikes* magazine – I particularly recall a feature about one event that described how you had to watch out for men with ‘bald back tyres and baggy black leathers’.

We loved the eclectic machinery and the wild home-made bikes. There was one story about an amazing shed-brewed V-twin which, from memory, had been built from two Weslake speedway engines, ran on methanol and looked like it wanted to break most of your bones.

When we eventually trudged to a few hillclimb meetings, we discovered that the bikes were just as unusual and interesting as we’d hoped, with various

motocross-based creations and extreme stripped-down stuff. And, of course, the riding was often just as wild. We loved the openness of the paddocks, the quick-fire nature of the racing and how close you could get to the action. Sat on a sunny grass bank, eating a packed lunch and watching hooligans wrestle wheelie-prone bikes up a nadgery slope on cold tyres was such a joy.

And it still is. A group of friends and I recently went to a meeting at Wiscombe Park. There might not have been as many bikes as there were 30 or 40 years ago, and there were fewer spectators too, but the atmosphere was still laid-back and still great. I’m pretty sure some of the bikes were the same ones we’d watched all those years ago, too. Thoroughly recommended.

Richard Cox, Whitwick

Peter Browne in baggy black leathers on a 741cc Weslake at the Barbon Hill Climb in July 1986

of the chapters, I’m on a mission to hunt down the Triumph Tiger pictured on the front cover of their classic 1985 album *Steve McQueen* (see left). The bike was hired from a Newcastle dealer for the photoshoot, so I’ve approached clubs and workshops in the north-east along with a few national clubs, but have drawn a blank. Do any *Classic Bike* readers know of its whereabouts? It’s a 1967

Tiger, registration ECU 574E. The DVLA website confirms it’s currently taxed, so hasn’t ended up in a breaker’s yard. Any help gratefully received!

Nige Tassell

House breaking

I always enjoy reading my monthly copy of *Classic Bike*, and especially your article about backstreet breakers in the August issue. Growing up in

Stoke-on-Trent, it took my mind back to our own local ‘go to’ bike breakers, Searles Motorcycles, located in an old terraced house in the Burslem area, just down from the Woolworth’s store. The proprietor, Frank Searle, was a real character with a strong Brummie accent who spent most of his time in the back of the house (living room) fiddling around with old bikes. The front room (parlour) would be



COVER IMAGE: ADAM SHORROCK

Issue #550 of *Classic Bike* was brought to you...



...to the sound of
The Who's 1960s classic,
The Kids Are Alright



...despite this distraction
'50cc with 30bhp', YouTube,
2Stroke Stuffing channel



...with this refreshment
Bakers Dozen's Acoustic
Landlady at Melton beer fest



...and thanks to
Goodwood staff for lending us
ponchos in the torrential rain

This issue was made by...

Editor Mike Armitage,
mike.armitage@bauermedia.co.uk

Group Art Director, Motorcycling

Steve Herbert-Mattick,
steve.herbertmattick@bauermedia.co.uk

Art Editor, Motorcycling
Claudia Channing

Production Editor Mark Holmes,
mark.holmes@classicbike.co.uk

Technical Editor Rick Parkington,
workshop@classicbike.co.uk

Senior Editorial Assistants
Sara Mattick and Sam Williams,
classicbike@bauermedia.co.uk

Advertising

Group Commercial Director
Gareth Ashman, 01733 468118

Commercial Manager
Sarah Nicholas, 01733 366311

Account Manager
Rebecca Jackson, 01733 395071
rebecca.jackson@bauermedia.co.uk

Senior Sales Executive
Annie Mulcrone, 01733 979445
annie.mulcrone@bauermedia.co.uk

Telesales
Imogen Jackaman, 01733 459278
imogen.jackaman@bauermedia.co.uk



ALEX BATEMAN

Gives the expression 'your bike's hanging' a whole new meaning. We'd rather see them on the road, though

considered as the 'showroom' – but really there was nothing on show, just a hodge-podge collection of old British bikes missing various components.

When you entered the front of the shop, you were usually met by Frank's young assistant, Dave. Most of the time, Dave knew exactly where to find the elusive part you needed and he'd go off rummaging around. On the odd occasion he was unsure, he'd call Frank up to the front – and right away, Frank would know where that part was or he'd say: 'We don't have that'. There was no inventory or cataloguing – it was all in Frank's head.

Many years later, after I'd moved to Canada, I remember my cousin telling me that there had been a big clearance sale at Searles and people had come from far and wide to buy up Frank's bits and pieces. Great memories; thank you Frank, for helping to keep my C11G and B31 going in the mid-'60s.

John Prior, Parskville, British Columbia, Canada

Buried bikes

Adding to your breakers feature, back in the late '60s/early '70s, there was a thriving motorcycle breakers in Fourth Cross Road in Twickenham known as 'The Graveyard', run by the late Dennis Heath. You could spend hours searching through piles of bikes in various states in the yard, or scour the shelves for that elusive widget. If you were lucky enough to find what you were looking for, you then had to run the gauntlet of Dennis's death stare and pricing structure. His premises

was located in the middle of a residential area – I'm sure the residents never got used to the noise and ever-present smog of two-stroke. I think it closed down sometime in the '90s, but I still have 'The Graveyard' patches on my leather jacket. Happy days.

Dave Kerr

Wall flowers

This is not a letter, more of a tip-off. As you can see from the photograph above, I found some interesting wall art at the Countryway Gunshop in West Malling, Kent.

(countrywaygunshop.co.uk)

Alex Bateman

Condensed version

Thanks for the article on contact breakers and condensers in July's issue. I just thought I'd add that the role of the condenser is significant. It prevents the energy stored in the magnetic field, set up by the primary winding, from burning the points when they open and the magnetic field collapses.

The condenser, in combination with the primary circuit inductance, also magnifies the voltage across the primary circuit windings (resonance) when the points break and the magnetic field collapses. The voltage across the primary circuit is then magnified in the secondary windings, directly in relation to the ratio between the primary and secondary windings (number of turns), thereby creating the approximately 20kV spark from the secondary circuit.

Condensers typically last a long time, but can fail, with the most apparent sign being a burnt set of points and difficult starting or poor running. Their role is crucial to obtaining a fat, healthy spark. If points are burnt, it's worth just changing them, as testing their functioning can't be done simply.

Peter Kimpton

ID for '67 TT riders

Hope this helps with identifying some more riders from the Startline shot of the 1967 50cc TT in the June issue.

My main interest being a certain number 12, P J Walsh, who is riding the Heldun Hawk 50cc single. I also currently own a Heldun 50cc, mine being a Husky trials version with a five-speed 'box and road registered. It would be interesting to hear from any other owners of this rare breed.

Anyway, here goes...

20 SGW Lawley, Honda

19 EL Griffith, Honda

11 T Fearn, Honda

25 RM Udall, Honda

27 CM Walpole, Honda

26 T Burgess, Yamaha

9 J Wheldon, Ital

23 DA Julee, Itom

15 M Carney, Derbi

24 TP Payne, Honda

28 JD Lawley, Honda

21 AG Hutchings, Tomatsu twin

29 MS Worsley, Itom

Sadly there's a few numbers obscured by the fold in the page!

Steve Reeves

Spy on a scooter

Regarding Rick Parkington's comment 'If James Bond rode a single...' relating to his test of the Velocette Venom in the August issue, I am sure he would have loved to, given the chance. But ironically, he did ride a single in the book *The Spy Who Loved Me* by Ian Fleming. In this book, he actually rode... a scooter! It was the same model that I had in those days – a 145cc Vespa Gran Sport. I managed 80mph on mine and would love to have another – but at £12,500-plus these days, that is not going to happen.

M Pagett

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letters@classicbike.co.uk

Classic Bike

MAGAZINE NEEDS YOU...

Have you just bought a new project? Or have you finished a project, taken part in an event or just been for a ride? Do you have pictures of you or your friends from your biking past? Or can you identify the riders or a face in the crowd from the Startline image on page four? Please write and tell us



Startline

How many riders from the 1987 startline can you identify?



Letters

Want to start a conversation about bike values or commend good service?



Your classics

Just acquired a new project, completed a restoration or been for a great ride?



The Way We Were

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WORDS: MARK GRAHAM PHOTOGRAPHY: VERRILLS

Stance, proportions,
wallop, colour –
all spot on



WE WANT IT

Doing things differently

Little shouts 'British classic' like a parallel twin. For rumbling autumn fun, we'd take the less trodden path to a trad home-made experience – this **1965 Royal Enfield Interceptor TT**

This magnificent British beast resplendent in Peacock Blue is one of the most underrated, undervalued and under-appreciated large-displacement '60s parallel twins – the Royal Enfield Interceptor.

The mere fact that not very many people bought the big Enfields – either in the UK or US – when they stuck to showroom floors like spilt sugary coffee, will never detract from their status as serious outliers.

When decent motorcycling roads are busy with groups of riders enjoying the charms of the very popular modern-retro

Triumphs, Enfields and now BSA Gold Stars, wouldn't it be nice to join them on a slice of original Redditch muscle doing what its makers intended? This is precisely the machine for that.

This restored 736cc Series I model was re-imported from the USA by Enfield specialists Hitchcock Motorcycles in 2022. It is registered on the correct-for-year C-plate suffix, and factory records confirm engine and frame numbers to be correct. Currently for sale at £6000 with Sussex dealer Verralls (01444 400678, verrells.com) for £6000, it's the real deal.

Most punters on both sides of The Pond opted for Triumph and BSA in the '60s. But a discerning few preferred the taller, distinctive profile and utter urge from the old school long-stroke Enfield powerplant.

Let's do bore and stroke numbers (all machines 1965 models). BSA A65, 654cc: 75 x 74mm, a modern almost square ratio. Triumph T120, 649cc: 71 x 82mm, undersquare but nothing too ridiculous for its time. Royal Enfield Interceptor, 736cc: 71 x 93mm, for a bore/stroke ratio of 0.76 – almost the same as the 0.74 of a 1922 Austin Seven. Antique then.

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Restos, riders and refreshers

**PRICE
£6000**

And yet. *Cycle World* magazine of the United States were fairly wowed by the old Enfield. They declared it 'handled well' and although the brakes left their testers a little cold, they happily called it 'the fastest true road machine we have ever recorded' through the timing lights. The figures: 13.8 seconds for the quarter mile with a 96mph terminal speed.

The current modern-classic 644cc Interceptor can almost match that, 60 years after the event. The 1965 original and the 2025 reflection both cost £6000. The former will require a degree of attention from time to time. The latter will still need a service every 3000 miles.

When the late automotive writer LJK Setright described the true Interceptor (albeit a later Series II) as sounding like 'a Tyrannosaurus Rex pondering breakfast', there's only one direction that six grand is going in, is there not?

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHIPPY WOOD, ADRIAN PINGSTONE, BAUER ARCHIVE

'If I had £10,000...'



Steve Tonkin has recently retired as a restoration ace, but keeps his hand in fettling his collection. The 1981 Junior TT winner reveals how he'd spend our cash

Veteran outfit

"First on the list would be a veteran machine with a sidecar. Something like a Triumph Model P from the 1920s with a wicker chair - it'll be fast enough to be fun with the chair - and more importantly these days, it shouldn't lose too much value. I saw a BSA DBD34 Gold Star up for only £7500 recently. The classics have dropped, but the veteran stuff seems to be holding up. I've only ridden a sidecar for a couple of miles - and it does require some technique. I've also been a passenger once, racing at Silloth [Cumbria] on a 600 Norton twin that my mate Neil Buckley built himself - he

£9000

did the frame and everything. Neil was driving... but that didn't last long. I tapped him on the shoulder to stop after about two minutes."

Some new hide

"I could do with some new leather riding trousers, that's for sure. I'm wondering

£800

how much they'd cost, but I'm sure Scott Leathers would do me something good for the right money. The first set of leathers I got made in 1972, with a blue body and orange sleeves, cost me 30 quid, but that's not going to be the deal now. I'd probably get a jacket to match, a two-piece thing. I never wear jeans to ride. I can't believe all these riders in shorts and flip-flops in the summer - they've plainly never come off a bike or they'd know a lot better."

A rainy day

"So - if the old combo sets me back about nine grand, and the leathers around eight hundred quid, I've got about £200 left... I don't know. I'll be picking up an old MG TD car shortly to go with Sue's MGA. I've got to do a fair bit of reorganisation in the workshop to get everything to fit. All the lawnmowers and stuff, the hydraulic workbench, it all takes up space; I should be getting rid of things, not buying more. I think I'd just pocket what's left."

£200

12 bikes you can buy

From charming and affordable lightweights to exotic sports bikes, temptation comes in many shapes this month. **Gez Kane** highlights his pick of the bunch



£3000-4000

1975 Honda CB500K

This first class example of the middleweight four has undergone an extensive mechanical and cosmetic restoration by a former owner – using NOS parts wherever possible. Regularly (though sparingly) used since.

handh.co.uk



£4000-6000

1955 BSA CB34 Gold Star

Such a low estimate would have been unthinkable a few years ago. Admittedly, it's a non-matching numbers bike fitted with an earlier ZB series engine (with Cronshaw race crankshaft), but it looks tidy and a lot of fun.

iconicauctioneers.com



£14,000-18,000

1991 Ducati 851 SP3

Number 447 of 500 homologation machines built in 1991, this has been part of a private collection. Imported from Italy in 2000 and fettled by Ducati Coventry at a cost of £1932, recorded mileage of 15,011km looks credible.

handh.co.uk



£2000-3000

1978 Honda CB175

Demand for quality Japanese lightweights continues and this one looks competitively estimated. A matching numbers machine in good running order and original condition, with recent full service and rewire.

iconicauctioneers.com



£4000-5000

1960 BSA A10 Super Rocket

Great-looking US-market machine bought as a project and extensively renovated at a cost of around £2700. The engine has been stripped and rebuilt using many SRM components. UK registered since 2023.

handh.co.uk



£30,000-40,000

1990 Norton F1

Norton's most desirable rotary, the race-replica F1 features a Spondon frame and WP suspension. This bike has never been registered or used since new and has only 57 factory test miles on the odometer.

iconicauctioneers.com



£8950

1977 Yamaha XT500D

Imported from Poland, where it was restored and a £1400 electric starter expertly grafted on, this XT500 is supplied with all original parts which were removed for the conversion. Runs and rides extremely well.

earlclassics.com



£2495

1961 Triumph T20 Cub

Owned by the seller for the past 50 years, this '60s Cub looks completely original and unrestored apart from a replacement exhaust. Little used since 1978, but regularly started and run, it was ridden very recently.

Private sale 07831 109961



£2750

1978 Suzuki Beamish RL250

Not the most competitive twinshock trials iron, but one of the most reliable and good looking. Not registered, but in good running order, this has been rarely used recently and is in average cosmetic order. Ride or restore?

classicsuperbikes.co.uk



£20,000-30,000

1972 Triumph X-75 Hurricane

An earlier restoration of the Craig Vetter-designed machine in excellent condition and running well. Imported from the USA in 2002 and in original trim, it comes with an extensive history file. UK registered on a V5C.

iconicauctioneers.com



£5000-7000

1979 Yamaha RD400F

This is the US-market Daytona model, meaning it has a revised cylinder head, restyled tank and detail differences from UK models. This restored example is largely original apart from the exhausts.

handh.co.uk



£1650

1955 Sun Hornet Cyclone

Delightful restoration of a charming 98cc Villiers-powered two-speed British lightweight. Retains its original registration and runs and rides well. Lighting equipment all works and the bike is ready to enjoy.

Private sale 07877 536948

Quick guide

Ariel Square Four



Simon Holyfield is machine registrar for the Ariel Owners Club and a Square Four owner for 13 years. Who better to explain the appeal of the 'Squariel'?

Why it's desirable

There's just nothing else like a Square Four. In fact, there are very few bikes that use a similar engine layout - Suzuki's RG500 Gamma is one, but there the similarities end. And it's the engine that makes the Square Four what it is. It's so smooth - and torquey. Two contra-rotating crankshafts cancel out primary vibration and a well set-up bike will pull from as low as 8mph in top gear. Not many bikes will do that. And, to me at least, they look sensational.

What to look for

There are two distinct 'families' of Square Fours. The 1931-1936 ohc models have a strong following with collectors. But the 1937-on ohv engines are generally more robust. The 1948-on bikes with alloy barrels and heads run a little cooler - though all of them run hot. The crankshaft sludge traps on all models are tiny and easily blocked - if you don't know an engine's history, strip it and clean them out. And fit an oil filter kit from Draganfly (draganfly.co.uk).

PRICES

Mint £10,000-15,000

Good £6000-8000

Project £4000-5000



JOHN NOBLE PHOTOGRAPHY

How much to pay

Prices for all Square Four models have tumbled in recent years. That said, the ohc models remain pricey. A 'kit of parts' bike will make around £4000-5000 and a mint example will probably sell for £18,000-20,000. The MkI ohv machines are probably the most affordable way into Square Four ownership, with project bikes cropping up for as little as £4000, decent rideable machines between £6000-8000 and really top-drawer examples around £9000-10,000. A ready-to-ride MkII will probably cost around £12,000-13,000.

Join the club

Established in 1951, the Ariel Owners MCC is the best support network for owners of Square Fours and any Ariel. We have around 1720 members, 16 UK sections and eight overseas; there are separate clubs in Australia and the USA, too. The club has seven spares officers - including one for the fours - all actively involved in remanufacturing hard-to-find parts, a great club magazine, a machine dating service, a very active Facebook presence and a discounted insurance scheme through Peter James. arielownersmcc.com

12 bikes that sold

Gez Kane takes his pick of the latest recent sales. From budget everyday classics to quality restos and machines with heavyweight provenance, the market is still lively



£4956

1973 Honda CB125S

The rise of the Japanese lightweights continues, as this confirms. It's a beautifully restored bike that looks in totally original spec. It has been on the road for a brief test and will need further running in.

manorparkclassics.com



£1800

1974 Ossa 150 GT

Rare matching-numbers lightweight Ossa road model in fine condition. Owned for the past 20 years and lightly used. Cosmetically restored a year ago, with fresh paintwork, alloy rims, new switchgear and seat cover.

mathewsons.co.uk



£2361

1989 Suzuki RG250 Gamma MkIII

Fairly tidy project bike requiring completion. Top end rebuilt with new pistons and rings; it starts but doesn't idle, although not a bad price for a sought-after machine.

ebay.co.uk



£7200

1984 Kawasaki GPz750 Turbo

Restored several years ago using genuine NOS parts where possible and repainted. Has won a number of awards at classic shows, but dry stored in a private collection for some time, so will need checking over for road use.

hjpugh.com



£3888

1938 Levis Model B

A lovely pre-war lightweight with just three owners since new. Very nicely restored a few years ago, the 249cc ohv machine remains in exceptional condition. Complete with V5C, original buff logbook and various invoices.

angliacarauctions.co.uk



£1560

1991 Honda CBR600F-M

A very tidy steel-framed second-generation CBR. Cosmetically restored by a previous owner, it retains the original exhaust system. Stored for some time (with carbs drained), it shouldn't take much to get it on the road.

manorparkclassics.com



£1650

1959 BSA C15 project

A strong price for a C15 project. Largely complete, but missing parts include lighting switch/wiring and fuel tap. It is from the first year of production, lending it more desirability, but resto will be a labour of love.

ebay.co.uk



£4100

1978 Kawasaki KH400

A KH250 with a KH400 engine slotted in. It has new seals throughout, new fork stanchions, levers and ignition coils, as well as Boyer electronic ignition and a Higgspeed expansion chamber exhaust system.

ebay.co.uk



£3700

1950 Velocette MAC

Wonderful example of Velo's middleweight. A first-kick starter, ready for riding and showing. Matching numbers, original transferable registration number, original logbook, continuation logbook and V5C.

ebay.co.uk



£6200

1966 Matchless G85CS

One of the 50 bikes from the collection of former Matchless factory rider Dave Curtis recently offered for sale. One of around 150 produced; imported from the USA, believed to have been ridden by Vic Eastwood.

hjpugh.com



£8000

2025 Rickman Triumph 650

Another bike from the Curtis collection, built in 2025 around a rebuilt Triumph 6T engine, with a refurbished AMC gearbox. In running and riding condition, it looks like a competitive candidate for classic motocross.

hjpugh.com



£2200

1981 Yamaha/EML sidecar outfit

Looks like fun for silly money. An XS650-powered outfit rebuilt in 2018 for long-distance classic trials. YSS suspension, five-gallon alloy tank and stainless steel exhaust.

hjpugh.com

Price check

Royal Enfield Bullet

Focusing on Indian-made Enfield and Royal Enfield Bullet singles – available in the UK since 1977, these models have gained classic status in their own right

Bike	Description	Winning bid	Auctioneer
2002 RE Bullet 350	Project bike, part-stripped, missing silencer/airbox	£530	eBay
c 2002 RE Bullet 500ES	Slightly scruffy, running, needs work	£700	eBay
1993 Enfield Bullet 350	Original, unrestored, stored in collection, 36 miles	£920	H and H
2007 RE Bullet 350	Good condition, needs carburettor setting up	£935	eBay
2008 RE Bullet 500	Damaged repairable (non-structural) project	£946	eBay
1988 Enfield Bullet 350	Good condition, recent new carb/points, runs well	£1000	eBay
1991 Enfield Bullet 500	Fair condition, stored for several years, needs work	£1030	eBay
1978 Enfield Bullet 350	Needs cosmetic work, mechanically sound	£1040	eBay
2004 RE Bullet 500	Nice condition, starts and runs well	£1070	eBay
2004 RE Bullet 350	Very tidy, original condition, low mileage	£1150	eBay
1999 Enfield Bullet 350	Starts and runs well, good clean condition	£1150	eBay
2002 RE Bullet 500	Fair cosmetically and ready to ride	£1220	eBay
2004 RE Bullet	Tidy, but requires recommissioning after storage	£1298	Manor Park Classics
2009 RE Bullet 500	Very clean condition, only 9000 miles	£1379	eBay
2007 RE Bullet 500	Very clean, low mileage, some spares	£1556	eBay
2005 RE Bullet 500T	Factory trials variant, tidy, running well	£1650	eBay
2008 RE Bullet 500	Good condition, only 2557 miles, long MoT	£1730	eBay
2000 Enfield Bullet 350	Only 89 miles from new, runs/rides perfectly	£1750	eBay
2002 RE Bullet 500	Rebuilt with many extras. Excellent condition	£2000	eBay
2005 RE Bullet 500	Trail trim, very good condition but non-runner	£2050	eBay

'How much?' **Gez Kane** on classic values



Indian-built Enfield (or Royal Enfield) Bullets offer tremendous value. Most sold in recent months were under £2000, with some tidy-looking machines for not much more than £1000.

Bullets have been built in India since 1956. The 1977-97 models that preceded 1998's all-alloy 'lean burn' engine are virtual clones of the Redditch originals, so

most parts are interchangeable. Spares are no problem, with specialist suppliers like Hitchcocks and Burton Bike Bits.

I've got a feeling that good examples of early Indian-built bikes might even start to creep up in value. But at the moment, you could still pick up a late-'80s/early '90s 350 or 500, perhaps needing a little cosmetic tidying, for little more than £1000. A cheap classic indeed.

The *Classic Bike* auction diary

October 29

H&H Auctions sale, National Motorcycle Museum, Solihull, W Midlands
handh.co.uk

November 1-2

Anglia Car Auctions, The Cattlemarket, Beveridge Way, King's Lynn, Norfolk
angliacarauctions.co.uk

November 5-11

Mathewsons online sale
mathewsons.co.uk

November 9

Iconic Auctioneers Motorcycle Sale, The Classic Motor Show, National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham
iconicauctioneers.com

November 21-22

HJ Pugh sale, Hazle Meadow Auction Centre, Ledbury, Herefordshire
hjpugh.com

December 5

Manor Park Classics sale, Ikon House, Manor Park, Runcorn, Cheshire
manorparkclassics.com

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NEC Birmingham

motorcyclelive.co.uk



H AND H

Padgett's 1988 RG500 was the last two-stroke to win the British F1 Championship



Ultimate RG for sale

British championship-winning RG500 is a pinnacle of two-stroke development

By 1985 Suzuki's RG500 was old news in racing circles. Hondas and Yamahas were winning GPs and Suzuki had ceased production of complete RGs. They still built engines, however – and in 1988 Yorkshire dealer Padgett's kept the RG flame alive by building the bike you see here. It's the machine that Darren Dixon raced to victory in the 1988 British F1 championship – the last time a two-stroke won a British superbike title.

Technologically, this RG – which will be auctioned by H and H at the National Motorcycle Museum on October 29 – is a rare beast. It has the 11th of 12 special race motors supplied by Suzuki with magnesium cases, stepped cylinders and new power valves, and Padgett's commissioned Harris Performance to build a steel frame for it that was an evolution of the Mk8 chassis

used in the GP bikes. The combination allowed ex-world sidecar champ Dixon to beat herds of newfangled four-strokes to take the title.

After this heroic achievement, the RG was bought in November 1988 by a bloke called Brian Burgess for his son to race. He campaigned it in British Superbikes – where two-strokes lingered until the early '90s – and club races until 1996.

The exotic engine was kept in fine fettle throughout by legendary two-stroke expert Roger Keen (who also tuned engines for Steve Parrish and Keith Huewen) and was later overhauled with fresh components by ex-racer Phil Lovett. It has recently been restored to Dixon's victorious 1988 livery with new Padgett's-applied paint.

The bike has an estimate of £30-40,000. More details: handh.co.uk



Restored and in '88 trim, it's estimated at £30k-40k



There are remarkably few scars from its racing past

What's new

Pegasus takes flight

This handsome curiosity – named Pegasus – started life as a 1928 Panther before its single-cylinder motor was replaced with a four-cylinder unit from an Austin Seven car. The result is up for sale with Iconic Auctioneers at the NEC show in November with an estimate of £24k-26k. More info: iconicauctioneers.com

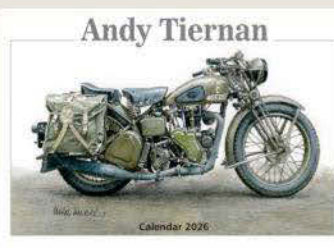
ICONIC AUCTIONEERS



Prepare for 2026

Ace mechanic and classic dealer Andy Tiernan has just released a 2026 calendar, with all proceeds going to the East Anglian Air Ambulance. This year's theme is Velocette, with six Velos painted in watercolour by Mike Harbar. It's £12 per calendar from andybuysbikes@hotmail.com

MIKE HARBAR



Mick Berrill RIP

Classic Bike was saddened to hear that long-time motorcycle dealer Mick Berrill has died, aged 88. Mick had owned his shop in Northampton since 1967 and was a hugely popular figure in the local biking community. All at *Classic Bike* send our condolences to his family and friends.

MICK BERRILL FAMILY



AUCTION

ICONIC AUCTIONEERS

Like buying a new one

1990 Norton F1 rotary for sale with just 57 delivery miles

Only 140 Norton F1 rotary sports bikes were built from 1989-91, so they're inherently rare, but this 1990 machine takes things to a whole new level of exclusivity. It's never been registered and has just 57 delivery miles on it. It's for sale in Iconic Auctioneers sale at the NEC Show in November.

The F1 was the road-going version of the British Superbike and TT-winning RCW588 race bike, featuring a detuned version of the racer's twin-rotor motor. In road form, the F1 made a healthy 95bhp, but Norton's engineering genius Brian Crighton squeezed a lot more than that from the race bikes – the first test mule cracked 170mph and when Steve Spray won British Superbikes it was thought to be making well over 150bhp, enough to make rival manufacturers whinge loudly about

that tricky-to-measure 588cc capacity.

The road bike's chassis is remarkably similar to the race bike's. Crighton asked Spondon Engineering to build his race bike frames, using the RG500's geometry as a start point, and Spondon went on to make the road bikes' frames too. The geometry changed from the RG's, incidentally, because the rotary engine's massive torque kept overpowering the suspension. The road bikes used cutting edge (for the time) WP front forks and rear shock.

This example was bought new in 1990 and was immediately put into a collection. It comes with all the original handbooks, three keys, a press pack, toolkit and the original invoice.

For more information on the bike, go to: iconicauctioneers.com

Greeves restructure

Greeves Motorcycles sprang from founder Bert Greeves' creation of the Invacar – one of the earliest mobility devices for the disabled (he built bikes to test Invacar components, before realising he could sell them too). And now Greeves is retreading

that path, with the company splitting in two – one half will concentrate on keeping classic Greeves on the road, the other on an all-terrain mobility scooter.

Gary Bamford of British Bikes 1970 and Greeves Motorsport is taking over the supply of spares for 1953-1976 Greeves models and classic Greeves merchandise. Bamford is a Greeves specialist who has restored over 70 of the marque's machines. He is also the chairman of the Greeves Riders Association.

Meanwhile, the original Greeves owner Richard Deal now concentrates on the modern Greeves trials bike he introduced in 2009 and his modern equivalent of the Invacar – an all-terrain electric-powered mobility scooter.

More info: greevesmotorcyclesltd.com



ICONIC

A young Malcolm Rathmell pilots his Greeves in the Vic Britten Trophy. The company restructure means it now has a separate classic division



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Goodwood Revival

This year's Barry Sheene Memorial Trophy was an exciting mix of star riders, varied machinery and changeable conditions. We slipped into our best tweed and went along to sniff the Castrol R



Goodwood's Revival is simply unique. Where else can you enjoy watching world-class riders caning finely-honed classic race bikes, then have your insides jiggled by the rumble of an AC Cobra, get up close to a Supermarine Spitfire and get ushered along by a worryingly convincing 1960s bobby?

With the entire venue awash with period clothing, music and machinery – and the paddock area pleasingly free from race

trucks and awnings – it's as close as you can get to actual time travel.

The bikes were the star attraction, of course. Open to machines that competed up until 1966, the Barry Sheene Memorial Trophy was run over two 25-minute races; riders got practice on the Friday, with part one on Saturday and part two on Sunday. The two-rider teams followed the usual pro-am format, with professional riders sharing bikes with less-professional partners and with enforced mid-race pit

stops/rider swaps. The paddock was dominated by Manx Nortons, but with interesting and exotic alternatives including a short-stroke BMW boxer, Triumph Daytona and Hansen Honda CR450.

With ever-changing conditions (part one started in heavy rain with masses of standing water, then rapidly dried out), it was as great a spectacle as ever.

Next year's Revival dates are September 18-20. Get your tickets and dig out the period gear early – this year was a sell-out.



▶ Going from seventh in the Le Mans-style start, British Superbike star Billy McConnell exits the chicane at the end of lap one with a clear lead. Circulating up to four seconds quicker than everyone else in the sketchy conditions, he handed the Norton to Tony Perkin and the pair won by a huge 42 seconds (having lapped everyone up to tenth place). Pro rider McConnell had to withdraw from Sunday's second part, but Perkin's 12th place was still good enough for second overall.

▶ Many riders had to get used to being on a classic bike rather than a modern racer. But Ben Birchall also had to adjust to having a wheel missing. The 14-time Sidecar TT winner made his Goodwood debut, riding a 1962 Norton Manx shared with Jake Dettloff and with a clear 'road shift' warning slapped across the tacho. "I can't remember the last time I raced a solo," he said. "We did quite a bit of prep last year as we planned to go solo racing, but I had a massive accident on a mountain bike that scuppered it," explained Birchall, who noted the biggest difference to his outfit was the missing eight inches of tyre contact patch. The duo finished 12th on combined times.



BSB racer Billy McConnell leaves everyone else in his bow wave at Goodwood's chicane

WORDS: MIKE ARMITAGE PHOTOGRAPHY: MIKE ARMITAGE, JESSE BILLINGTON



▶ Chris Barfe has brought his glorious Hansen Honda CR450 to Goodwood on ten previous occasions. Built around 20 years ago, using dimensions and geometry from original Honda documents, the parallel twin has been ridden by several big-name riders over the years. This year, it was TT hero Dean Harrison sharing the controls with Chris. "First time Dean sat on the bike with it running was for Friday qualifying," said Chris. "I did four laps to qualify, scrubbed the tyres in, then he did the rest of the session. He just kept going faster - his 1m 31s lap is quicker than we've ever gone before.

"In Saturday's race, we were kept in the holding area for quite a while and the clutch adjuster worked loose - I noticed it as Dean ran across the track towards me at the start. We lost a couple of laps, but we finished. On Sunday, the back brake stuck partially on. Again, we freed it off, and off he went again. You can tell a lot of the modern-bike riders are used to slipper clutches, quickshifters and revving. Classic bikes don't last long if you ride them like that, but Dean was brilliant. You can tell he's sympathetic to the bikes and he gives loads of feedback. We'll be back - and Dean's keen to ride it again. He's seen the potential."

Daniel Winter works for BMW developing modern bikes, but classics are his passion



❏ Daniel Winter was twirling spanners on a brace of BMW opposed twins: two Kaczor R50S examples with pushrod engines and an RS54 with a short-stroke bevel-drive motor. "This is my first time at Goodwood, but some of the team have been racing BMWs and coming here for 20 years. I work for BMW - I develop and engineer bodywork parts for modern bikes. I did the fairing for the new R1300RT and currently specialise in fuel tanks. Doing this is a passion. Our bevel engine is faster than the pushrod, although the Nortons and Matchless are faster - but when it's wet, we have a bit more of a chance."



❏ "I've ridden here maybe six times before, on different bikes every year," says TT winner and BSB rider Davey Todd. "Last year I rode the hand-shift Kompressor BMW. It was terrifying, but an awesome experience. The BMW that I'm on this year isn't too fast. We're a bit down on power. It's ironic, because last year the Kompressor bike was way up on power but didn't handle; this year it's vice-versa. I'm hoping the wet weather turns it all upside down." Unfortunately, Davey's bike didn't finish either part of the race, but at least he got to ride in the back of a '50s Chevrolet rescue truck. Fellow BMW rider Michael Dunlop qualified in 25th place, then switched to Norton machinery for the races - he made up a whopping 21 places on Saturday to finish fourth.

❏ "This is heaven for a petrolhead - not just the bikes, but the cars and the period costume," reckons Jenny Timmouth, who was riding a Matchless G50 with Mike Farrall. "The classics are quite a bit away from modern bikes. This has got about 49bhp where a superbike has about 220bhp, and this has a right-foot gearchange and drum brakes, so it's a big difference. I'd not ridden our bike until this morning [Friday practice]. Working out how to get the best out of it is the hardest thing - that right-side race-pattern shift... and the brakes... and the suspension. It's all about keeping momentum, like a two-stroke 250cc racer." Jenny and Mike finished 15th overall.



Goodwood draws the biggest names in racing. Alongside BSB champions including Tommy Bridewell and Leon Haslam, and TT legends John McGuinness and Michael Dunlop was 500GP winner and 2011 World Superbike champion Carlos Checa (right). After qualifying 19th, the Spaniard and team-mate Joaquin Folch-Rusinol Jnr didn't finish a lap in Saturday's race, but on Sunday went a second faster than their qualifying time to claim 11th.

'It's petrolhead heaven: the bikes and period dress'



Diary dates...

October 25 **Kempton Park Autojumble**

Still hunting for that elusive part for your project? Pop along to Park Racecourse and have a good rummage. Expect hundreds of trade and private stalls, with folk from across Europe coming to buy and sell. kemptonautojumble.co.uk

26 **Ardingly Classic Bike Show**

The theme for this event is Indian motorcycles, with a special talk from Allen Ford who used the American V-twins for the wall of death. The compere is Rick Parkington (who you may have heard of). The grounds and halls at the South of England Showground will also have club stands, autojumble, plus a 'workshop clear-out' section (stalls £20 each if you fancy shifting some clutter). elkpromotions.co.uk

November 15-23 **Motorcycle Live**

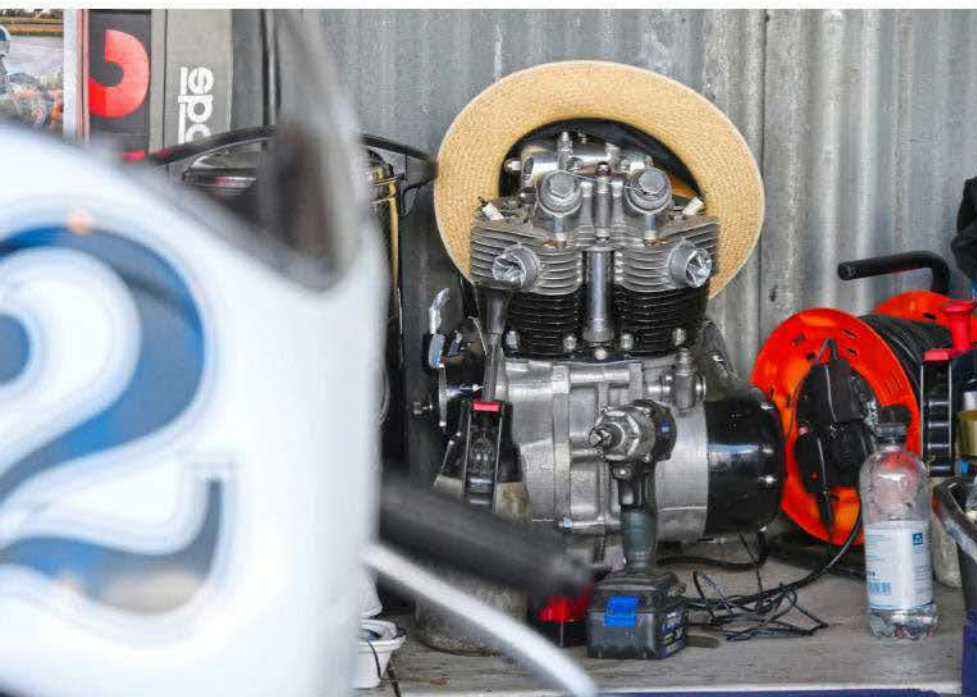
Bounce up and down on the seats and pull the levers on all the latest retros at the NEC in Birmingham. This year there's going to be a Heritage Zone with a large VE Day celebration and a collection of machines from the National Motorcycle Museum. Turn up on your motorcycle and park for free. motorcycellive.co.uk

16 **Harboro Rocks trial**

Peaks Classic Trials Club have their penultimate outing of the year at Harboro Rocks near Brassington in the Peak District. Expect enthused application of British, twin-shock and air-cooled monoshock trials equipment in this fabulously picturesque location. peakclassic.co.uk

16 **'Normous Newark Autojumble**

Tools, parts and stuff galore at Newark Showground, with indoor and outdoor stands plus a classic bike display area (there's one for classic cars, too). The last of the eight Newark jumbles for this year. Might be frosty. Take a hat. newarkautojumble.co.uk



It wasn't all thumping singles. Supporting the twin-cylinder cause alongside the BMWs and Honda CR450 was a 1967 Triumph Daytona, run by Ace Classics and ridden by Kevin Rushworth and Maria Costello. Built in seven months up to the event by Ian Willits, it sounded superb. The duo finished in 20th in the combined results.



Finishing second in race one and third in race two gave the overall victory to Steve Plater and Glen English. They got to enjoy fat cigars on helmet-free celebration laps on their Matchless G50. "The G50 is an iconic bit of kit, and this one does everything you expect - it changes gear nicely, and while it's not the quickest thing out there it's not slow," said ex-British Supersport champion and TT winner Plater. "The difficult thing about racing these bikes on treaded tyres is that we try and over-ride them. You get chatter in the middle of the corner - and the only way to cure that is to open the throttle before you get to the corner, which makes it go even faster..." **CB**

Rescued, revived & ridden

The classic bikes that you have found, restored or just taken for a ride

EDWARD FOREMAN



Andy's 'doer-upper' A10 has come on a long way since he took it on (see inset)

RESCUED

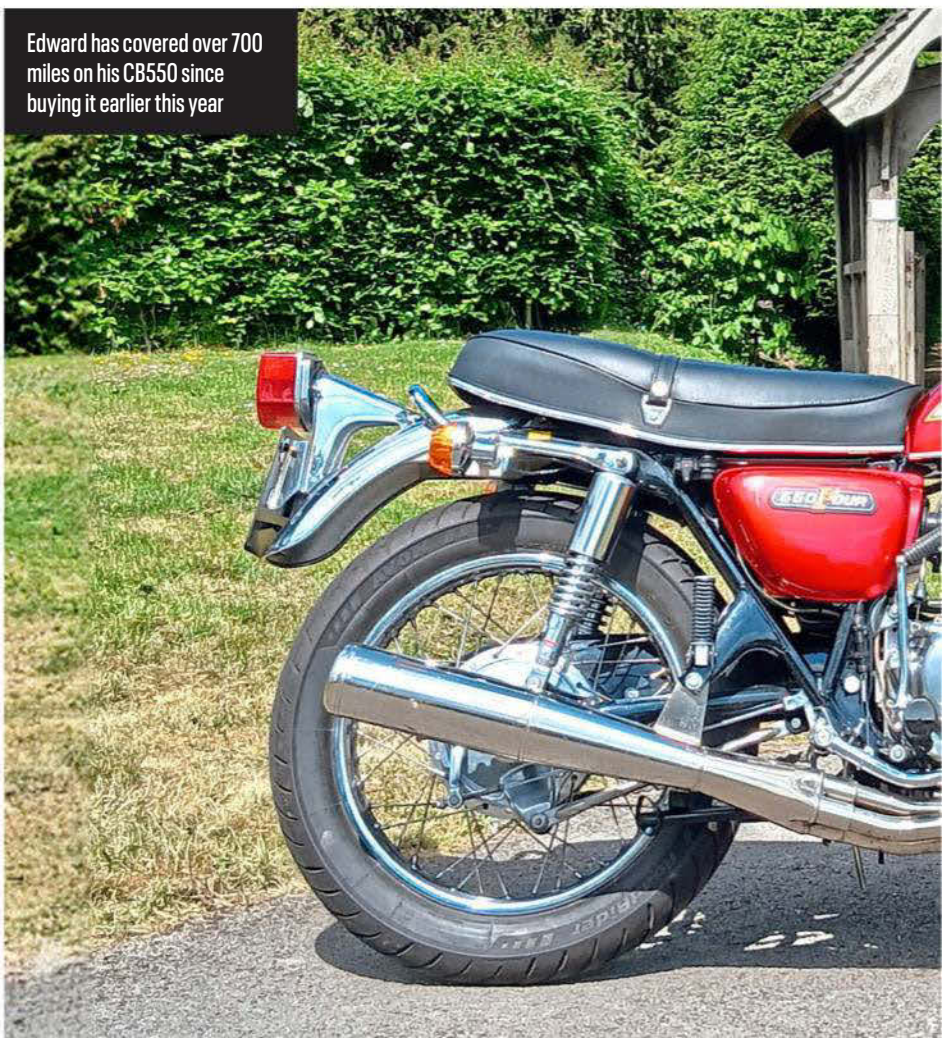
My blue heaven

▲ Hankering after an old British bike led me to buy this 'doer-upper' 1960 BSA A10. Advertised locally with a V5, I think it was the Nutley Blue colour that took my eye. Over the last three years, I've stripped it to a bare frame, then refurbished and rebuilt it from the ground up. I used as many original parts as possible, as well as adding an alloy head and some Taylor Dow period accessories. I completely rebuilt the engine, gearbox, brakes and wheels with new and NOS parts. Even the speedometer needed replacement gears.

Having had sports bikes for years, I must admit I enjoy the comfortable riding position and sounds and smells I get from a trip out on the BSA. My dad owned an A10, so he was really pleased to see the bike progress into the finished article. My good friend John Langston did the paintwork – a smashing job. The restoration wasn't easy, with some parts getting harder to find, but I got there in the end. I nearly gave up a few times, but my wife Julie convinced me to carry on. I'm glad I did!

Andy Malpass

Edward has covered over 700 miles on his CB550 since buying it earlier this year



REVIVED

Multinational effort

▣ This is my special – a Sunbeam S8 with a historical connection to World War II. Both the Russians and the British got their hands on plans and manufacturing rights for the BMW R71, a 750cc side-valve boxer (the Russians pre-war and the British in reparations after Germany's defeat). The British chose not to make a direct copy like the Russians. The basic frame design was used by BSA for the Sunbeam S7/S8, with their own 500cc inline twin.

My S8 project re-imagines what could have resulted if BSA had gone down the same route as the Russians, using a 750cc side-valve engine from an early Ural mated to a Sunbeam gearbox and shaft drive. The frame needed little modification and the end result is both pleasing to ride and pulls like a train! I have used it quite regularly, doing 3000 miles with no significant problems. The torque is such that, once in motion, you can stick it in fourth and it will surge up to 70mph with no need to change gear.

Peter Knight

PETER KNIGHT

Peter's Sunbeam special reflects German, British and Russian influences



SHOW US YOURS

We love to see your acquisitions, regular rides and projects. If you've just bought a project, finished a restoration or been for a ride then send us a picture. letters@classicbike.co.uk



ANDY MALPASS

RIDDEN

Runs as it looks

▣ I already had a 1975 CB750F, so when the opportunity to purchase a CB550 from the same year came my way earlier this year, I jumped at the chance. The 550 was built in November 1975, but it's a 1976 model – a K2. Like my 750, it's an American import – it had been restored to a high standard by a previous owner, then bought by a friend of mine, but left standing due to the Covid pandemic.

I purchased the bike from my friend and went through it, sorting out the poor running and bedding it in. It now runs as good as it looks.

It's quite light and agile, feeling quite modern to ride. The 'oversquare' engine likes to rev. Top speed and road performance are very similar to my CB750F, but it lacks the larger bike's grunt. Although fitted with a 'swinging caliper', the front brake feels strong. It returns up to 56mpg and runs its original contact-breaker system – perfectly adequate for covering 2000 miles per year. After over 700 miles, I can thoroughly recommend one as a classic bike.

Edward Foreman

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Expect bigger thrills than ever — roaring race bike start-ups, dragsters shaking the ground, and live stage sessions packed with stories, laughs and behind-the-scenes secrets from TV celebrities and the stars of the sport.



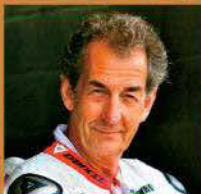
HENRY COLE AND FRIENDS: RAW AND UNPLUGGED

Join TV's Henry Cole, engineering genius Allen Millyard, and master craftsman Guy 'Skid' Willison for live stage sessions across the weekend. Expect behind-the-scenes secrets from their hit TV shows, stories, laughs and plenty of banter — plus the latest news on the brand-new MotorbikeShow.com online subscription platform.

Allen will also give an update on his Norton Nemesis project, bringing Norton's radical 1500cc V8 prototype back to life. After clearing 110mph at 8,000 rpm with plenty more potential, he's now gearing up for a land-speed record attempt, aiming to surpass the current V8 bike record of 136mph.



STAR RIDERS



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Marketing Executive Alice Burbridge
Newstrade Marketing Manager Joe Deboo

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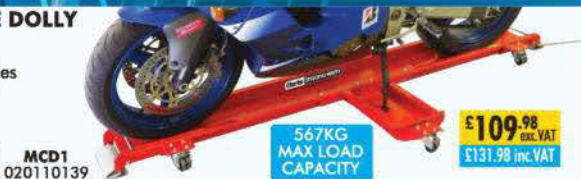
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Time for a double-take: This creation looks like a GP bike that's taken an unexpected detour onto a Sussex B-road



Playing King

Gasoline Alley have crafted a **Yamaha RD500LC** into this breathtaking road-legal Kenny Roberts YZR500 replica. We take it for a spin

Words: **JIM MOORE** Photography: **ADAM SHORROCK**

Building a special from scratch for someone else is rarely easy or a smooth process,” explains Gasoline Ally Speedshop gaffer Andrew Burke as we quaff our umpteenth mug of morning tea, while admiring the fabulous Kenny Roberts rep Yamaha before us. “But I knew we’d got this one right when Adrian Ringrose, the owner, saw it for the first time.

“I was showing him around it, explaining what we’d done. He was crouching down looking at the rear suspension when he suddenly stood up, arms in the air, fists clenched, wide grin on his face, and lets out this huge ‘YES!’ That was it. We’d hit the spot...”

And what a spot. Adrian’s bike is not a paintjob with pipes. Behind its bright yellow hue, period-style bodywork and hundreds of hours of work lies a true one-off, a machine rarer than the factory YZR’s ridden by King Kenny himself. The frame was made from scratch, as were the loom and electrics, while 95% of the bike’s other components have been so heavily re-engineered from their original spec that they’re now as bespoke as the chassis.

As with many of the best specials, there was no long-conceived plan or burning desire that finally got put into action. Just a spark and a flurry of passion. In fact, Adrian had no idea he needed a late-’70s style GP replica in his life until February last year, when he attended a Two-stroke Start-up Day put on by Andrew

and the boys at their shop in Hailsham, East Sussex.

“One of the bikes there was a Yamaha 500 racer, just like Kenny’s,” explains Adrian. “I thought at the time it was a pukka YZR, given its yellow and black speedblock colours, but I later discovered it to be a 1982 TZ500J – the production version of Roberts’ bike. It was beautiful, in a brutal kind of a way, and it got me thinking.”

Amid the clouds of sweet two-stroke fumes and cackling expansion chambers at the Start-up Day, Adrian, Dan (a mate from London’s Bike Shed) and Andrew concocted a plan to do something special with a 1986 vintage RD500LC that Adrian had owned since the late ’90s.

“I hadn’t used the RD since 2012. We moved house and it got put away in the shed and forgotten about. When I first got it in 1997 it was really tidy and in non-standard Marlboro colours. I did a few trips abroad on it, including to Le Mans, but it was in a sorry state when I dragged it from the shed and got it to the Gasoline Ally workshop.”

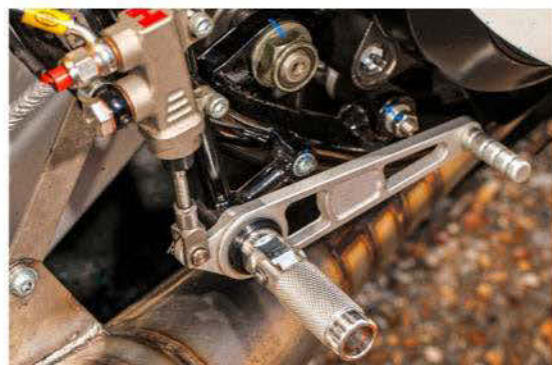
An initial plan to strip and restore the RD, then spruce it up in Kenny colours, was swiftly rejected on the grounds that, as Adrian affirms: “Everything needed doing – engine, chassis, bodywork, electrics, the lot. So it would have been a full and expensive rebuild, yet it still wouldn’t have the ‘wow’ factor that I got from the TZ500. That was what I wanted, so the plan evolved from there.”

Making frames is bread and butter work for the

RIGHT Carbs and pod filters are tight up against the inner fairing



FAR RIGHT Rearsets are currently set low for comfort rather than torture



RIGHT Owner Adrian (left) and Gasoline Ally Speedshop’s Andrew Burke check the bike. Its one-off over-engine Maxton shock is pure engineering art





boys at Gasoline Ally. Over the years they've earned a reputation for producing high-end chopper and bobber chassis. They've also developed a lightweight frame kit for Royal Enfield's 650 twin, as used in the recent Interceptor and Continental GT models. So the idea of creating a new frame for the RD, from scratch, quickly became the focus of the project. But not just any frame – Adrian wanted a like-for-like replica chassis of the TZ500 he so coveted.

Step forward problem number one. The TZ500J uses an inline four-cylinder two-stroke motor, the middle two cylinders exiting forward, with the outer pair reversed to allow a straighter run for the upper spannies. An RD500LC motor is a V4, so accommodating a radically different engine layout had to be considered when designing and building the new frame.

Jake Packham is Speedshop's design engineer, so the job of figuring out how to fit a road-going V4 with side-mounted carbs into an across-the-frame race chassis fell to him.

"Initially we thought about retaining the RD's headstock area and tank, but it quickly became clear that was not going to work because: a) the LC's frame tubing is box-section, not tubular, and b) the RD tank would interfere with the cantilever-style shock we wanted to run – the stock 500LC shock runs under the engine."

Race bike geometry, designed for razor sharp turn-in, doesn't always translate to the road either, creating potentially nervous handling or slappy steering. So Jake added a touch more rake to the RD's new frame and an inch or two to the wheelbase to give the reworked LC a better chance of working on His Majesty's Highway. A removeable bottom frame rail makes installing and

removing the V4 lump that bit easier, too.

"The most time-consuming and fiddly job of the build was making the fuel tank," adds Adam Dellow, Speedshop's ace welder. "We knew the RD tank wouldn't work, so I offered up an early FZR400 unit for size. It gave us the rough shape we needed, so I used that as a template. Adrian didn't want to run premix, so I had to find space for an oil tank as well. I ended up creating an oil tank from scratch and incorporating it into the front of the fuel tank. The oil filler is through a dummy breather that I got from a GSX-R750."

This build was never going to be an exact like-for-like, given the starting point of a completely different engine configuration, so the latitude to deviate from the TZ500 template – and the inspiration of Roberts' factory YZR500 – was afforded the boys from the start. A balance between cost and the benefit of more modern componentry also played a contributing part, allowing Jake and Adam to source most of the rolling stock from Yamaha's late-'90s and early-2000s sports bike inventory.

"The front end – wheel, forks and discs – are YZF-R6," confirms Jake. "The swingarm and rear wheel are YZF-R1. Adam's modified the swingarm to accept the new lower shock mount and filled in the hole where the original R1 shock ran."

As we stand chatting, discussing details, Jake removes the bodywork from both the TZ and RD, to give a better view of the former's lengthy DeCarbon shock – so named after Mr De Carbon, whose design separates the shock's oil and gas in a chamber in front of the spring and damper. Yamaha was the first Japanese manufacturer to introduce single-shock rear suspension to its GP bikes, having first developed the system on

ABOVE Inside the Gasoline Ally workshop where Adrian's RD500 was transformed into a YZR500 rep. In the background is the TZ500J that inspired the build

‘There was no long-conceived plan or burning desire – just a spark and a flurry of passion’



ABOVE Undiluted two-stroke thrills and roomier riding position make for a win/win on the road. And yes, it sounds fantastic

its motocross machines. Roberts' factory YZR was the first to benefit from the technology, as well as Yamaha's YPVS powervalve system – innovations that quickly filtered through onto production racers like the TZ, and then onto road bikes (LCs being early recipients) not long after.

"Maxton built the shock for Adrian's RD," Jake tells me. It's a work of engineered art and a one-off, like much of the componentry surrounding it; from the subtly curved frame-to-fairing stays and perfectly formed frame rails ("It's E235 steel; strong, easy to fabricate, and with enough flex in it not to crack"), to the intricately welded JL expansion chambers that snake their way from the rear cylinders and out either side of the bespoke bottom shock mount. It's a shame it's usually all hidden by bodywork.

"If you look carefully at the seat unit and fairing, especially from behind, you'll see that the RD is slightly wider," says Adam after refitting the LC's yellow clothes. "We've made the riding position around 10% more generous than the race bike, partly out of necessity – the width of the pipes forced us to cut both fairing and tail piece in half and add an inch or so extra to attain the correct fit – and also to make the bike more comfortable for Adrian to ride. You wouldn't make it to the shops and back on the TZ without having to visit an osteopath afterwards, so we've allowed the RD's dimensions to breathe a bit."

The motor breathes through four modestly sized foam filters that cap all four 26mm Mikuni carbs. Being a special, you might reasonably assume this RD's engine's been treated to a bastard-file short back and sides – but after much discussion between the boys and Adrian, the decision to keep it stock was reached. And with good reason.

"This bike is way lighter than a standard 500LC – by at least 20 kilos," chirps Andrew when he hears us talking about the engine spec. "The standard pipes alone weigh a ton; these JL pipes, that Adam's modified



ABOVE Fairing and seat unit were cut lengthwise and widened to take the pipes. It's all beautifully executed

to suit the bike's different dimensions, are between 5-10kg less than stock. Then there's the frame – the original box-section steel chassis weighs a lot more than the new frame and swingarm – and then there's hollow-spoke wheels, new bodywork, lack of an airbox, etc. It all adds up. With considerably less bulk to push along, the motor feels way more perky than it would in a back-to-stock RD."

The other crucial decider for engine spec was reliability. Tuned engines produce extra heat – on RD500LCs that's a real problem, because the rear cylinders are last to be benefit on the coolant's cycle around the engine and back to the radiator. Consequently, seizure of the rear right pot is common on tuned 500LCs and it's not a simple issue to overcome.

So, with that in mind, the engine has been rebuilt from top to bottom to standard spec by Simon Thompson of Heathfield-based 70s-80s Restorations. "He's a pleasure to deal with and meticulous in his attention to detail, so he was always going to be our first choice for the job," says Andrew.

Eighty-ish horsepower might not sound that impressive, given that some RG500 specials can reliably (if expensively) see north of 120bhp – but on the road

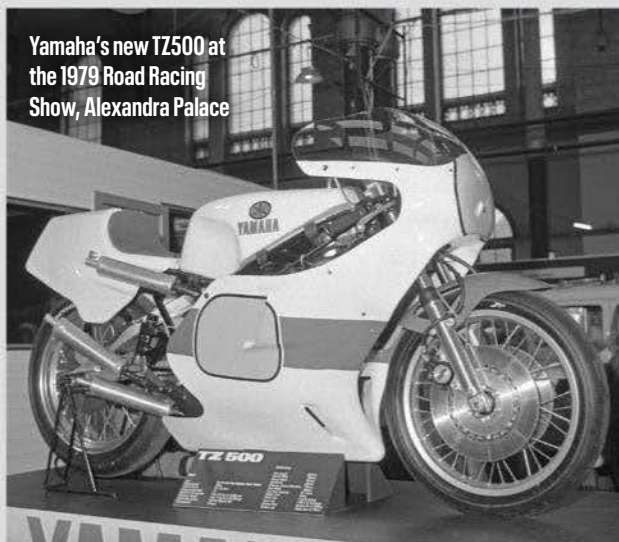
The inspiration: Yamaha's privateer 500

The bike that piqued Adrian's interest and set the ball rolling towards his tired old RD500LC becoming a Roberts-alike was a 1982 TZ500J. Yamaha introduced the TZ500 as the G model in 1980, as a production racer for privateers based on King Kenny's championship winning 1978/79 factory YZR500 OW35 and OW45.

Weighing 135kg dry and producing 115bhp, the TZ proved to be competitive against Suzuki's production RG500s in both national and international 500cc competition, although it struggled against the considerably more powerful factory bikes of the era. That said, the TZ500 did manage to score a world championship win – its one and only – in the hands of Dutch privateer Jack Middelburg at his home Grand Prix in 1980.

The TZ500's final model, the 1982 J, is often known as the 'Roberts rep' on account of closer spec to Kenny's 1980 OW45R. Yamaha reversed the engine's outer cylinders, aping the factory bikes – both G and H models ran four front-exiting pipes with the outer left expansion chamber doubling back through the frame to come out next to the right side panel, just like Kenny's early YZR.

Yamaha's new TZ500 at the 1979 Road Racing Show, Alexandra Palace



‘Lighter componentry with a strong, wonderfully crisp V4 makes for a rapid machine’



SPECIFICATION | 1986 YAMAHA RD500LC SPECIAL

ENGINE Type Liquid-cooled reed-valve 50° V4 two-stroke with YPVS Capacity 499cc Bore x stroke 56.4 x 50mm Compression ratio 6.6:1 Carburation 4 x 26mm Mikuni Ignition Programmable electronic **TRANSMISSION** Primary/final drive Gear/chain Clutch Wet multiplate Gearbox Six speed **CHASSIS** Frame Tubular steel cradle Front suspension 43mm telescopic forks (Yamaha YZF-R6), adjustable preload, compression and rebound damping Rear suspension Maxton cantilever single shock, adjustable preload, compression and rebound damping Front brakes 2 x 298mm discs, four-pot Brembo calipers Rear brake 1 x 220mm disc, two-pot caliper **Wheels** Five-spoke cast aluminium (Yamaha YZF-R6 front, YZF-R1 rear) Tyres 120/70 ZR17 (F), 190/50 ZR17 (R) **DIMENSIONS** Wheelbase 1355mm Seat height 790mm Dry weight 175kg (est) Fuel capacity 17 litres (3.73 gals) **PERFORMANCE** Power (claimed) 88bhp at 9500rpm* Torque (claimed) 48.4 lb ft at 8500rpm* Top speed 148mph (est) *standard bike

where this Yamaha will rack up most of its miles, the performance, drive and potential of this motor are more than enough.

Furthermore, starting Adrian's 500 is a lot easier than some GP specials we've sampled. Turn the key, prime the carbs with a whiff of choke, then prod the kickstarter. Two prods on the stock kicker – why replace it when it looks so good and works so well? – and the four single-skin spannies bark into life, spitting sweet white jets of burnt fuel and two-stroke oil into the warm summer air. It's an aural, nasal and vibrational sensation I'd never tire of experiencing.

Once warmed through and out on the leafy East Sussex lanes, Adrian's RD feels strange at first. Roomier, as promised, than many specials – two-stroke replicas in particular – but very much its own animal on account of rearsets that are mounted much less extremely than I'd anticipated. In fact, they're almost mid-mounted in terms of the bike's overall dimensions.

But I get it. Adrian wants his bike to be capable of reasonable distance: "It wouldn't be much use if I have to get off it every few miles, just to get the circulation back in my legs," he grins. "But it's early days and we're still fine-tuning things like the riding position, so there's scope to change."

With a few miles under my belt, I'm starting to bed-in to the Yam's ergonomics and idiosyncrasies. Andrew was right – this build's diet of lighter componentry coupled with a strong, wonderfully crisp V4 motor makes for a seriously rapid machine. RD500s always benefitted from strong midrange performance; now with

ABOVE Want to be Kenny? Gasoline Ally are already talking to potential customers about a limited run, and about different formats – Suzuki RG-based versions in Sheene or Schwantz livery, for example, all with their frames

a fair chunk less baggage to push along, Adrian's LC rips out of mid-rpm turns like a firework that's burnt the last of its wick, tearing up into the upper reaches of its 10,000rpm rev range. Pure two-stroke heaven.

The chassis is quick to turn in to any fast-approaching bend, too. It's a bike that's light on its feet and eager to make progress, especially when the going gets twisty. Braking unleashes an embarrassment of riches – Brembo calipers chomping down on twin 298mm discs via top-notch Hel lines and master cylinder. It's enough to smear the front Pirelli Diablo Rosso into the tarmac with a rub of one digit on the lever. Beautiful.

This is a one-off build, however, that's only just been let loose on the road, so there are issues yet to be ironed out. Nothing major, all easily rectifiable. Indeed, we're discovering one or two on our ride. The side stand hits the deck on left-hand turns – a simple repositioning by Adam will sort that – and, if Adrian intends to take his 500 on track, the lower pipes will need bringing in a touch to improve ground clearance. Again, Adam's already working out a solution.

"We're going to change the instruments as well," says Andrew. "We'll be having something more in keeping with the overall look. Those on there now, they're just temporary."

What's permanent, though, is Adrian's grin. He's rightfully delighted with how the lads have transformed his formerly shabby Marlboro 500 into this magnificent Kenny Roberts' replica that perfectly blends the best of both period and modern components. They certainly did hit the spot. 🏁

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Ed soaks up the sensations of a 1968 Trophy, while Rick gets a go on Ed's retro Royal Enfield Continental GT. Let's see what they both make of them...



**‘It was made four
decades before
I was born’**



Retro is all the rage – but what does a young 21st century bloke think of a *real* classic? We pop 20-year-old Ed Armitage on a 57-year-old Triumph to find out

Words ED ARMITAGE Photography GARY MARGERUM

I've been riding for four years and have tried quite a few different machines – but this 1968 Triumph Trophy is unlike anything I've ridden so far. For starters, it has to be kicked into life and the gearchange is on the right. It has something called 'carburettors', which apparently need 'tickling', and you need all your fingers to work the brakes. There's also a lack of indicators and mirrors, some slightly twisted forks and 60 years of wear and tear to take on board. On first impressions, it's a lot for someone raised on modern retros to get used to.

RIGHT Ed goes even further into a timewarp with a visit to Rick's workshop and an education on 110-year-old technology

Since passing my A2 test earlier this year, I've been riding Honda's new classically-styled single-cylinder GB350S – which I love – and have recently swapped it for a Royal Enfield Continental GT 650. But while these bikes look 'classic', they're thoroughly modern in terms of feel, control and behaviour. Before trying the Triumph, I'm not sure quite what to expect of a motorcycle that was built almost four decades before I was born. It can't be that different... can it?

Doing the knowledge

I'm in welcome autumn sunshine in the garden of CB's own Rick Parkington. It's his Triumph that I'll be riding, and our day starts with a 'grand tour' which includes an introduction to the many bikes spread around a multitude of sheds. There are engines stacked on shelves, stripped parts, frames, tyres, drawers full of I know not what, and enough tools and equipment for every conceivable task. It's all a bit overwhelming – but it's also hugely inspiring. I feel like a kid in a toy shop; my eyes don't know what to feast on next. Rick highlights fascinating facts about everything he shows me, and I'm blown away by his level of knowledge and attention to detail.

If I'm not bewildered enough by the mountain of bikes and parts, Rick then wheels out the replica of a 1915 Blackburne motorcycle that he built himself. "There's no clutch, no gears and a belt drive," he says. "It'll sit happily at 50mph." I can't begin to comprehend riding something where you have to bump-start it and then can't stop without killing the engine. Frightening is probably the best word for it.

Thankfully, his 1968 Triumph Trophy is rather less bewildering, although there's still plenty for me to take into consideration. Propped proudly in the sun for me to admire, my first thought is simply: 'Wow!' The shape, the smell, the colour – it looks exactly how I imagine a classic bike should, properly used and properly loved. Rick's owned it for 40 years, ever since his 21st birthday in 1985. In those four decades the 649cc twin has been ridden, dismantled, rebuilt, crashed, sold, bought back, rebuilt again and ridden

some more. Nearly 15,000 days of tinkering, caring and devotion have gone into this Triumph Trophy, and he knows every square millimetre of it.

I'm given the edited version of the knowledge that Rick has gained in his time with the bike. From bow to stern, he pinpoints every detail and feature; how things are supposed to work and what they do, as well as common mistakes people make. Some pointers make me feel less confident than others...

"The front brake is quite good and will stop the bike quite well; the back brake is quite spongy, but it's not bad," he tells me. "I would say it's worth using all four fingers on the front brake – give it a good squeeze. And if it doesn't stop very well, squeeze it harder."

Brakes that aren't as potent as the discs I'm used to are expected, but now Rick talks me through three or four things I've never heard of and don't really understand. That the bike needs 'tickling' is the one that stands out the most. "This device is a tickler button, and it basically raises the float level in the carburettor. You may want a bit more fuel for starting, so by pressing the button you lower the float and let more petrol in, so you're actually flooding the carburettor." He demonstrates this beautifully, repeatedly pressing the tickler and sending a dribble of petrol over his hand onto the floor. When you've finished tickling, starting the bike then needs a perfectly-timed leg on the kickstart, while adjusting the twistgrip and holding the front brake on. Will it tick over when it fires? No.

Er... anything else, Rick? "I don't think there are many flaws on this bike. Oh yeah, having said that, one thing about it – the forks are a bit off. I tried to straighten them, but you only really notice it when you're riding it. Not looking at them is the best answer."

Time to ride

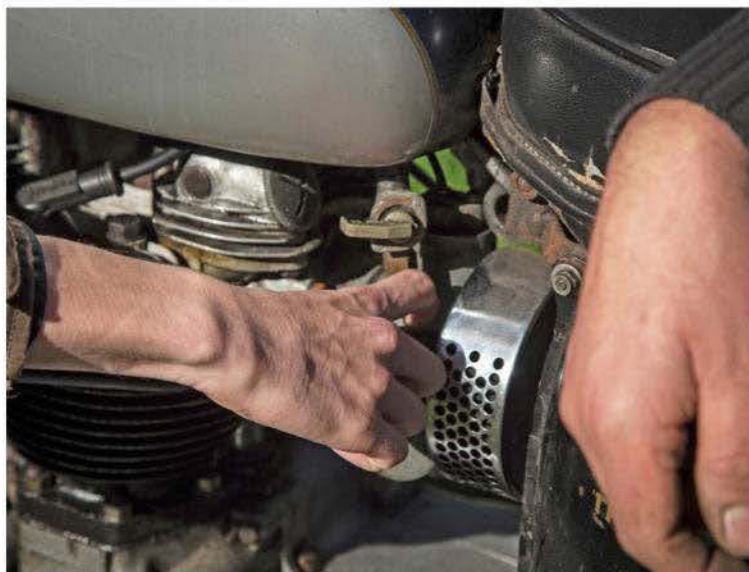
Apprehensive but also definitely excited, we head out. I'm following on the Enfield as Rick leads on the Triumph. With his silver bucket helmet, goggles and leather jacket, he looks the part. And what a noise! I thought the Enfield was loud and had a deep sound, but the older 650 is in its own league. There's an edge that the Continental GT doesn't have. We thread down some meandering, dappled lanes, the Triumph's superb racket ricocheting off the greenery. It's brilliant.

We head to an isolated single-track road where the fun can begin, and I can get a feel for the Triumph without worrying about too much other traffic. I play through the complicated starting ritual in my head – it involves the throttle, brake and kickstart all at once, plus let's not forget the bike can spew petrol out at the push of a button. After an embarrassingly long time sussing out the kickstart and getting the fuelling just so, the twin cracks into life and I crack into a fat grin – after which, I have to acquaint myself with the clutch and the oddly-placed gearshift.

And then – deep breath – I'm ready to roll.

It felt heavier than the Enfield while manoeuvring around at walking pace, but as soon as I open the throttle and the thud-thud-thud pushes me up the lane, the Triumph handles light as a feather. It swings and turns far more easily than newer bikes. There's

BELOW Tickling the carb was an alien concept to young Armitage, but he soon learned it wasn't a joke equivalent to sending an apprentice to the stores for a tin of tartan paint





'Rick talks me through things I've never heard of and don't really understand'



'What? You don't start it with a button?' Ed gets to grips with the right throttle/front brake/right boot settings during fire-up procedure

YOUNGSTER ON A CLASSIC

a real directness about the throttle, too. First gear in the four-speed 'box is much taller than first on the six-speed Enfield, but it reacts more keenly – it's like the twistgrip is better connected to the engine. It takes me a bit of time to stop arguing with the gears, though, and there are quite a few misguided attempts to change gear by using the back brake pedal.

Yet after a surprisingly few runs pootling up and down the lane, I feel like I'm getting my bearings. Clutch and gears become more natural. I stop stalling so much, and when I do it becomes easier to suss the kickstart.

I arrived today thinking: 'Oh God, it's 60 years old, it's going to be impossible and heavy and sluggish... and I'll drop it with Rick watching'. But no. I'm happy to say it's bloomin' amazing. It's smoother than I expected, with the riding position and controls feeling surprisingly comfortable. The brakes need a good squeeze, as Rick had warned me, but you soon stop thinking about it and just do it. The engine turns out to be flexible and quite forgiving, too. And the smell and sound are great.

After a short while, I'm feeling confident. Initial fears are now a distant memory. I really start to enjoy the ride of the Triumph, so we head out onto proper roads. The modern Enfield can seem a little sluggish at low revs and speed; it only seems to get into its stride when revving the eight-valve motor more and going a bit faster. It's the same with the handling – the bike drops into corners at low speed and needs faster turns to come alive; the café racer needs to be doing 50mph to feel responsive. With the Triumph, though, I don't want or need to go fast – and not because I'm worried something horrifically bad will happen. It's because the flexible engine and the handling on those slim tyres feel much the same at 20mph as they do at 50mph. Vibration is more pronounced on the Triumph – you can feel it after a few minutes of riding with traffic and on faster roads, but it doesn't spoil the enjoyment.

At 40 or 50mph on B-roads and quieter back roads, I'm perfectly happy and get in a bit of a groove. It swings satisfyingly through corners, and I find myself slowing down so that I can accelerate again and hear and feel the engine. I even start sticking my arm out for junctions. I was surprised just how different the Triumph is to modern machines on my first contact with it, but with a short period of acclimatisation I'd go as far as to say it doesn't feel like I'm riding a 60-year-old bike. It exceeds my expectations tenfold.

New or old?

This is the question – side by side, which do I prefer? I really enjoy the Enfield, with its mix of modernity and character. It would always be my choice over a contemporary-styled modern bike. But there's just something else about this Triumph Trophy.

I came to this already having a bit of an appreciation of old things. I do a bit of clay pigeon shooting and my favourite gun is my 100-odd-year-old Greener, for example. My room is dotted with vintage furniture, old coins and various other items with a history. But I didn't expect riding – and smelling and hearing – the

ROYAL ENFIELD CONTINENTAL GT

648cc (78 x 67.8mm) ohc twin

47bhp at 7250rpm

Brakes: 320mm disc (f), 240mm disc (r)

Tyres: 100/90-18 (f), 130/70-18 (r)

Wheelbase: 1398mm

212kg (kerb)



Triumph to have such an impact. I remember something Rick said earlier: "They're worse than heroin, these things – once you start, you can't stop." I can now see clearly how it's easy to get hooked.

As someone who had barely even sat on a classic before, let alone ridden one, I'm surprised by how quickly I've adapted to such a different experience, and how rewarding it is. When you take everything into account – handling, sound, vibration, techniques, rust, whiff, the whole feel of the bike – it's just so much more intriguing and compelling than a modern bike.

Today's retros have character, and they're competent and reliable machines – but the Triumph shows that they're also a bit one-size-fits-all. The '68 bike is just so much more engaging. In terms of practicality and everyday riding, a modern bike would probably be more attractive when the weather's grotty and there's a long ride ahead. And while the opportunity to roll your sleeves up, make a brew and spend a day in the shed tinkering with a classic sounds great, I'm sure it could lose its appeal when your transport depends on it.

To be honest, though, after a day with the Triumph all I'm left wanting is enough space for another bike in the garage. As soon as there is, I'll be seriously tempted to take the classic route.

ABOVE Modern GT doesn't look out of place with the 650

RIGHT Ed did his CBT (Compulsory Basic Training) at 16 to ride a moped. At 19 he could then do his 'A2' licence with theory test, module one (manoeuvring) and module two (on the road). This lets you ride a bike up to 47bhp and no more than 0.268bhp/kg, so opens up a world of classics. We need to start a 'ride a classic' campaign at training schools

TRIUMPH TR6 TROPHY

649cc (71 x 82mm) ohv twin

42bhp at 6500rpm

Brakes: 8in drum (f), 7in drum (r)

Tyres: 3.25 x 19 (f), 4 x 18 (r)

Wheelbase: 1397mm

173kg (dry)



Is there a place in Rick's heart for a new Enfield?

Old boy rides a modern retro...

Could I live with a Royal Enfield Continental GT? Yes. It's got the compact build I like, perky performance with a decent spread of power and similar 'just follow your eyes' cornering to my Triumph. The only negative on my ride is a slightly clumsy feel on a slow bend, but nothing scary and I'd soon get used to it.

Overall, I find the Enfield fun to ride - once I figure out how to start it. Ironical that after guiding Ed through the treacherous waters that surround kickstarting Brit twins, he sails off leaving me searching vainly for a button on the Enfield switchgear marked 'Start'. Eventually I decipher the noughts and dashes that represent 'On' and 'Off' nowadays to find the traditional-looking kill switch doubles as a starter button. Whatever next...

Could the Enfield substitute for my Triumph? No. Nice as it is, the GT feels a bit superficial compared to my Trophy. I'd consider one if I needed a modern bike for harsh motorway work - but I don't. When I chose old British bikes at 17, it wasn't just about looks or image; I like things I can repair, not replace. Old things. That's what's missing in 'retros'. That kill switch looks like a '70s Honda one, but its multi-function tech makes it modern. For me, retros are neither fish nor fowl - too old-looking for new bike lovers, but still just as modern beneath the surface. It's a much better effort than some I've ridden, but I think I'll stick with my Triumph.

Rick Parkington





Bruno Tagliaferri

He worked with John Bloor for 29 years, helping turn Triumph into a global force. So what was it like in the early days of the Hinckley bikes?

Words JOHN WESTLAKE Photography BAUER, TAGLIAFERRI ARCHIVE, JOHN WESTLAKE

It's the autumn of 1990 and Honda's UK sales and marketing manager Bruno Tagliaferri gets a peculiar phone call. A recruitment agent tells him a new motorcycle manufacturer is about to launch in the Midlands and asks if he's interested in a job. Naturally, Bruno is sceptical. He's carved a successful career with the UK market leader and has no desire to ditch it. But he's also intrigued and agrees to a secret meeting with a self-made building millionaire called John Bloor.

Then, just before the interview, the new six-bike Triumph range is revealed to global amazement at the Cologne bike show. "Then I was very intrigued," says Bruno as we wait for lunch at a restaurant just down the road from Triumph's HQ, where he worked for 29 years before retiring in 2019.

"John and I talked for four hours. He told me the story of what they'd been up to and that they were ready to go – they had enough parts to build 200 bikes, but they weren't launching until February. I couldn't believe they'd kept it all under wraps."

But Bruno was even more impressed by Bloor's attitude. "Despite being such a successful businessman, there was no ego about him and he was genuinely

Bruno (right) with fellow architects of Triumph's recent success: marketing man Miles Perkins (left), chief engineer Stuart Wood and the first iteration of the huge-selling Speed Triple





The 1990 launch of the new Triumph range in Cologne (right) happened days before Bruno's job interview with the boss, John Bloor

interested in what I was saying. He wanted to learn from me because I was from Honda [Bruno had worked there for 12 years] and we were number one, but it was new ground for him. He wanted to know everything about costs, reliability, dealer motivation... everything. I was totally motivated by him. He was very inspiring.

"Then he asked the question I was dreading – what did I think Triumph could sell in the UK per annum? I said they stood a good chance of getting 10% of the UK big bike market – then about 2000 sales. That was an ambitious number because they were going up against the Japanese benchmarks. Since I've retired I've seen BSA and Royal Enfield come into the UK market and they've done well, but they're not aiming as high as Triumph did back then."

During Bruno's second interview, Bloor took him round the factory. "I was amazed – not only by the technology, but by his relationship to the workers. People were saying 'hello John, how are you?' and he knew every single person by name."

Bruno was hooked, and took the job as Triumph's UK sales and marketing manager, working closely with Bloor for the next three decades. Because of Bloor's notorious reluctance to talk to the press, I'm fascinated to learn what he was like to work with. "He was immense," says Bruno, his eyes lighting up with a gleam that no boss has ever inspired in me.

"He was so hands on. If you rang the factory back then, there was half a chance you'd get to speak to John. And when owners sent him problems, he'd personally make sure things were sorted quickly. I remember once we had a problem with a bike in Leeds after we'd been running for about three months. John said he wanted the same colour bike taken off the line, taxed, then sent up to the customer the same day. The bosses of Japanese rivals couldn't do things like that.

"He led by example, and that filtered down through the whole company. We were all accountable to John. I reckon he was worth 10% to me in sales, because I knew he was interested in what I was doing. If I went to see a potential new dealer, he'd ring me the next day to find out how I got on. He wasn't being difficult or checking up, he was interested. That's brilliant – really motivational. You work harder. And he did that with everyone."

I open my mouth to ask what the downside of Bloor's management style was, but I'm not quick enough. Bruno's on a roll, clearly enjoying talking about his old boss: "You did things for John. That was a big driver. For example, we were doing a recall on the Explorer [Triumph's big adventure bike] and we agreed to do the work at the factory, so a van would go to a dealer, pick two bikes up and bring them in. Dealers liked that, because their workshops were busy enough already. On one occasion the van took two bikes back to a dealer, but he pointed at one and said 'that's not my bike', even though the factory label said it was. Turned out he was right – we'd mixed up the bikes. It was Friday afternoon, the factory had closed for the weekend and the bike's owner was due on a ferry that evening. He rang the factory and I picked up the phone. I told him to leave it with me, which



After the initial buzz died down, people started to question the paintjobs. Can't think why...



One of very few publicity shots of John Bloor, taken in the early 1990s

'John Bloor had no ego about him. I was totally motivated by him. He was very inspiring'



Bruno accepts the Rocket III's 2004 Bike of the Year award from Suzi Perry and MCN editor Marc Potter

he was understandably sceptical about.

“I rang a senior guy at home and explained the situation – he said he’d come in, pick up the right bike and van it to a service station near the owner so he could pick it up. And that’s what happened. I said to the guy: ‘what you did was f**king marvellous’, and he just said: ‘after all John’s done, it’s the least I can do’. You couldn’t *make* someone do something like that. It was just one of the things that happened.”

Bruno’s first job at the fledgling Triumph was to set up a dealer network. Thanks to the Cologne launch, he faced a surprising problem for a new motorcycle company – being deluged with dealers wanting to stock the new models. “We had 550 applicants for UK franchises – anyone who was selling big bikes wanted to be a part of it, so I had to whittle them down. We came up with a document asking them detailed questions about sales, staffing, shop layout, etc. It ended with: ‘what do you think you can offer us?’

“A lot of dealers wouldn’t fill out the form, so they were out. Then we chose them purely on merit and got some great people. Not all of them were high-volume businesses – we knew that if someone was selling 50 Ducatis a year back then, they were probably very good and worked hard.

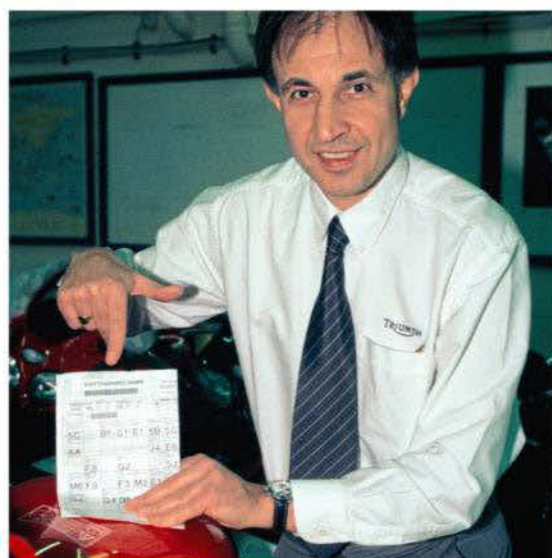
“Seeing some of the dealers grow from nothing was fantastic. We found a great operator in York who had very modest premises – a Portacabin on a back street. But we saw something in the family – they were desperate to succeed – and A1 Moto have gone on to win our Dealer of the Year award several times.”

While working with the dealers, Bruno was applying what he’d learned from another inspirational boss –

‘Anyone selling big bikes wanted to be a part of Triumph’

Honda UK’s Eric Sulley. “He made people feel valued, though he was completely different to John – a real showman with a big ego. I watched him launch 12 bikes on stage once, wearing a white suit and a stetson. There were no rules – he could run any campaign he wanted. And the great thing was that he made you feel good – he had an ability to make people feel part of something.”

Bruno started working for Honda in 1978, when having an exuberant boss was a distinct advantage. “Characters like Eric influenced sales as much as any marketing, because he could talk dealers into buying loads of bikes. I remember once, he came into my office and said we needed to shift some bikes. He wanted me to put together a package for dealers – and if they bought it, they’d get a free trip to Acapulco. I actually created two packages of about 45 bikes – nearly all slow sellers, but with a few big sellers thrown in. Eric



Bruno poses with one of the first ever Hinckley bikes in 1991. He's pointing to the factory 'build card' showing model, colour, chassis number, country of destination...

The 2002 fire ripped through the factory, turning much of it into charred scrap. It was a pivotal moment: Bloor and the team had to decide whether to give up or start all over again



...and 28 years later he receives his retirement gift from Triumph boss John Bloor in 2019. Quite a run, that

liked them and we launched it at a time when there was snow on the ground. Within three days, we'd filled a Jumbo jet with dealers. Some bought two packs so they could take a friend. And of course the warehouse emptied. Trips like that made dealers feel integral to Honda – and it was them that turned the company into a powerhouse. Eventually we had a guy working full-time doing recce for the dealer trips.”

The scale of Honda's operation and sales back then are mind-boggling by today's standards. “Honda had 860 dealers out of a total of about 2500 franchised operations – today, manufacturers have between 50 and 100 dealers. In some towns there would be two Honda dealers and two Yamaha ones. These days you might get one dealer per county.

“The sales were immense. Honda's market share rarely fell below 55% and the market peaked at 331,000 in 1981. In that year we sold 18,500 CB250 Super Dreams. The C90s and C70s were doing 60-70,000 a year. Even the CX500 got up to 10,000 bikes a year. If a bike did that today, it would be a market leader.

“If there was a price rise coming up, dealers had three days to order at the old price – and the six or seven people on the sales desk literally could not write the orders down fast enough. One year we took 10,000 orders just to beat the price rise – 10,000! You'd get three C90s in a crate and dealers would ring up saying they wanted four crates of blue, four of red and so on – they'd order 50 C90s and then move onto the Super Dream and order a similar number.”

By combining Eric Sulley's emphasis on making dealers feel valued with Bloor's straight-talking ethos, plus his own easy-going persona, Bruno soon developed a network of loyal Triumph dealers (100 of whom turned up to his retirement party). He even got them involved in bike development. “We used to get them to the factory as often as we could; we'd listen to them and make changes, which they loved. The Japanese factories couldn't do that. A good example was when we were at a crossroads with the Daytona [middleweight sports bike] and John told us to get some good sports bike dealers in. Their guidance was invaluable – we needed a triple and it had to be quick. So that's the direction we went and the 675 was the result.”

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. By the time of the Daytona 675 in 2006, Triumph was a nailed-on success. But that wasn't the case early on and it was years before Bruno was certain his move from Honda wouldn't turn out to be a career dead-end. “We actually beat Ducati in the first year with nine months' sales, but the next year was tough because we were found out a bit, with criticism of the colourschemes and the bikes being tall and heavy.

“We thought we might tick over, but we still weren't sure we could appear on the same sales charts as our competitors. It was only after the T595 Daytona was revealed [in 1996] and we took 1850 deposits before anyone had seen a road test of it that I really started to believe. I knew that if we could keep making bikes like that, we had a great chance.

“But by far the biggest pivotal moment came after



12 years in 2002, when the factory burned down. I was running the line for my son's under-10s football team on a Saturday morning when I got a call from the general manager, who asked me if I'd heard the news. There had been a big fire on Friday night that had destroyed factory one and he wanted to put a team together to work up a recovery plan.

"I went in and there were 20 heads of teams, plus two specialists who were experienced at handling big insurance claims. I immediately wondered if John would be up for doing it all again. He'd put so much into it. But the fire demonstrated the determination of everyone to make Triumph work, from John down. If Nissan had a fire and you had a car on order, you wouldn't worry about it. But with us, there were customer doubts. We were a small player.

"Fortunately, John had taken out excellent insurance that covered the costs of getting back to the level we were before, so we could afford a big advertising campaign to win customers' confidence. The money also paid for the business consultants McKinsey to review our

business – that's when bikes in the pipeline like the four-cylinder superbike were stopped so we could concentrate on twins and triples. We also decided we needed to be between the Japanese and the Germans in terms of price."

The desire to keep costs down led to one of Triumph's most controversial decisions – moving the bulk of production out of the UK, thereby severing all ties with Meriden's UK-built history. "Ultimately, I think it was a very wise move to set up in Thailand. The cost of building a bike out there was significantly lower and it meant we could keep growing. There was a fear about the perception, but the UK headcount stayed about the same and quite a few people from the UK factory went to work in Thailand.

"Obviously the dealers knew what was made where, but they couldn't tell by looking at the bikes – the quality was identical. And when customers mentioned it to me on show stands, my set response was to ask what car they'd got. If they said BMW, I'd explain it was made in Turkey. I drove here in a Mercedes today and it has a Renault engine made in Spain. Global production had become the norm."

We've finished our coffee and a waiter's patiently lurking in the corner of the now-empty restaurant. As we stroll out, I wonder if Bruno misses any aspects of the early days of Triumph. "We were so close to customers back then," he says. "I did two factory tours a week and the customers loved the fact that the UK sales manager was showing them round. I remember having a chat with a guy from Chesterfield, then saw him on the Triumph stand at the NEC show later that year and said hello. He turned to his mate – who was sceptical about Triumph – and said: 'let's go to the Honda stand and see if they recognise you...' I loved having that kind of connection." **CB**

Speed Triples, a Tiger and a crated Sprint ST in the factory, 1999. The following year Triumph started making a profit after millions of investment



Bruno spent 12 years working for Honda UK, often visiting Japan to try new models – in this case (left) rather a small one

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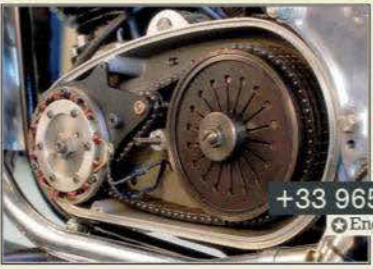
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Kawasaki Z1000J2	Original, fabulous only 15k miles	83	£15,500
Yamaha XT500D	Restored bike with electric start	77	£8,950
Yamaha RD350LC	Lovely UK 4L0 bike, Allspeeds	82	£8,950
Honda CBR900RRN	First model blade, original, vgc	92	£7,750
Suzuki Katana 650	Superb, only 9,000 miles	82	£7,750
Honda CB400F	Superb low mileage bike, new paint	76	£7,500
Yamaha RD350	Great example, runs superbly	72	£7,250
Suzuki GS1000	Lovely example original exhaust	80	£7,250
Kawasaki GPz550A1	Superb only 7,000 miles, rare	83	£7,000
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BSA's big bargain

Always fancied a British classic but never taken the plunge? The charming, reliable and affordable **A10** is a great way in

Words: **GEZ KANE** Photography: **BAUER ARCHIVE**

The pre-unit BSA 650 twin is one of the classic world's gems, yet it's often overlooked. Even in its basic Golden Flash incarnation, it has ample power, predictable handling, decent reliability and undeniable charm. It's increasingly affordable too, making the A10 a bike you should consider when entering the world of Brit classics.

The riding experience shouldn't alienate those used to modern bikes, but transports you back to an age long before ABS, traction control and power modes – a time of engagement, involvement and rich riding rewards.

The Golden Flash has a comfortable cruising speed of 60-65mph, and on a good day this iron-headed machine will hit the 95mph mark – more than plenty. If you want more, any of the Rocket variants will top the ton with relative ease, with even more performance on tap

from the top-of-the-range Rocket Gold Star. Throw in a sweet gearbox and decent clutch (from 1960, when the four-spring version replaced the earlier six-spring unit) along with that solid handling and you've got a genuinely impressive classic ride.

Living with an A10 is a relatively breezy experience. The engine is generally a remarkably reliable and durable unit – and if anything does go wrong, parts supply is generally excellent. There are plenty of options if you want to improve on BSA's original offering, too. Engine parts are plentiful, with modern billet alloy conrods and improved pistons, valves and guides readily available. BSA specialists SRM Engineering are one of the best in the business, too.

The clincher is that there's never been a better time to buy one. Tidy, sweet-running bikes are currently available for as little as £3500. Turn over for our advice on getting the best one you can...

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THE BIG QUESTION

Does it need a bearing conversion?

Replacing the timing-side main bearing bush with a roller-bearing conversion is often cited as a 'must do'. To find out if it is, we spoke to Jon Jolley, one of the owners of SRM Engineering - the suppliers and manufacturers of the ball and roller bearing conversion. You'd expect him to be evangelical about the merits of the modification... and he is. But he also concedes that the standard bush can work well, too.

"If the bush has been installed correctly, the crank is in good condition and you're meticulous with oil changes, it can last well. We undertake a fair few bush installations for our customers. Pressing the bush into the crankcase distorts it slightly, so you have to use a bush with a smaller inside diameter and bore it to suit the crank once it's in place. But the ball and roller bearing conversion - which also incorporates reworked oilways that feed the big-ends via an end-feed quill in the end of the crank - is the



gold standard. It also positively locates the crank, eliminating the need for shimming. If you're rebuilding the engine anyway, I'd always fit the conversion. It costs about £675 - that's £375 more than fitting a bush correctly. We've never had one fail yet - I'd say it's worth it for the peace of mind."

What to look for

Frame

Check the frame around the head races and swingarm pivot. Loose head race bearings can distort the frame, while the swingarm bushes break down over time - and if the spindle nuts are left loose, it can cause wear in the swingarm mounting plates on the frame.

Engine

If the 646cc parallel twin starts easily and runs reasonably quietly, chances are it's OK. There is much debate over the supposedly wear-prone bush on the timing-side main bearing, but not having a conversion isn't a big deal (see left). Check the stampings on each crankcase half just below the dynamo, at the front of the engine - they should match. BSA cases were machined in pairs and non-matching crankcase halves can cause all manner of problems. Post-1957 cranks are stronger (and there's an improved timing-side bush from then, too).



Magneto

If the engine starts easily when cold but not when it's hot, suspect the magneto. Mag rebuilds aren't cheap, so allow for the price of one when bargaining. Modern electronic ignition conversions are available, too.

Clutch

The four-spring clutch fitted from 1960 is a big improvement over the earlier six-spring item. SRM can supply conversion kits to allow the four-spring clutch to be fitted to earlier swingarm machines, or complete new clutch and belt primary-drive kits.



Electrics

The six-volt dynamo electrics are marginal at the best of times. If you're going to use the bike regularly, find one with a 12-volt conversion and a modern electronic regulator/rectifier.

Brakes

Stopping isn't the A10's strong point. The early seven-inch front drums are fairly woeful, but the Ariel units introduced for 1956 are a slight improvement. Skimming the drums and fitting oversized linings machined to match can make some difference.



RESOURCES

SRM

Have been serving A10 owners since the '80s. Services include the needle roller timing-side main bearing conversion. srmclassicbikes.com

Draganfly Motorcycles

The Suffolk-based firm holds huge stocks of BSA parts. draganfly.co.uk

Burton Bike Bits

Parts specialist for British bikes, with plenty on the shelf for A10 twins. britishbikebits.com

BSA Owners Club

Lively social scene and massive collective knowledge base for all BSAs. bsaownersclub.co.uk

C&D Autos

They've been going even longer than the A10 and stock masses of parts for the A10 owner. **01564 795000**

SPECIFICATION 1960 BSA A10 GOLDEN FLASH

ENGINE/TRANSMISSION

Type	Air-cooled ohv parallel twin
Dimensions	70 x 84mm
Capacity	646cc
Output	34bhp at 5150rpm
Compression ratio	7.25:1
Carburation	1½in Amal Monobloc
Clutch	Wet multi-plate
Gearbox	Four speed

CHASSIS

Frame	Tubular double cradle
Front suspension	30.37mm telescopic forks
Rear suspension	Twin shocks
Brakes	Front 8in sls drum; rear 7in sls drum
Wheels	Spoked front 3.25 x 19in, rear 3.50 x 19in

DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase	56in (1422mm)
Weight	430lb (195kg)

PERFORMANCE

Top speed	95mph (ish)
-----------	-------------

MODEL HISTORY

1949 The 646cc A10 is shown at Earls Court.

1950 First production year of the A10 in both rigid frame and plunger suspension versions.

1952 Tuned Super Flash model is offered, initially in USA, but some sold in the UK, where there's an optional dual seat and the rigid-frame A10 is dropped.

1953 Headlamp cowl and rear light redesigned.

1954 Swingarm frame offered as an option. Road Rocket model with higher (8:1) compression, alloy head and TT carb goes on sale in the USA.

1955 Monobloc carb replaces the Type 276 previously on Golden Flash.

1956 A10



1956 Road Rocket goes on sale in the UK alongside the Golden Flash. Full-width seven-inch Ariel hubs fitted.

1957 Stripped down A10 Spitfire Scrambler marketed in the USA.

1958 Super Rocket, with higher compression, beefed-up crankshaft, Monobloc carb and revised timing-side main bearing bush replaces Road Rocket as top of the range A10.

1960 New 1 $\frac{1}{16}$ in carb replaces the previous 1 $\frac{1}{16}$ in item. Four-spring clutch replaces earlier six-spring unit.

1962 Rocket Gold Star – basically a Super Rocket engine with higher compression and bigger carb in a Gold Star-style frame – is offered. RGS and Super Rocket have floating brake shoes, lower first gear and optional siamese exhaust system.

1963 A10 production ends in spring.



Which to buy, what to pay...

BSA's A10 is one of those happy 'right first time' designs that has stood the test of time. Available initially in either plunger or rigid form, a swingarm model was introduced for 1954. Apart from that, development was fairly limited throughout the model's 14-year production run.

Three principal variants were sold in the UK: the Golden Flash, Road Rocket and Super Rocket. Golden Flash models are identified by their iron cylinder heads, while the Rocket models have an alloy head. The rare and desirable Rocket Gold Star (RGS) was only produced for the 1962-63 sales seasons. There's also the rare and not quite so desirable A10GF, a Golden Flash with alternator electrics and coil ignition made in small numbers.

Early rigid and plunger models can make a little more money because of their relative scarcity. A plunger restoration project should be around £4000 – about the same as a ready-to-ride Road Rocket in decent condition. An immaculate restored machine should fetch £5000-6000.



If you're buying a bike to do some proper riding on, don't turn your nose up at sensible modifications

Genuine Rocket Gold Stars are a different matter. Essentially a tuned Super Rocket engine in a Gold Star-style frame, values are way higher than the rest of the A10 range, making £15,000-20,000. The RGS seems to have avoided recent Gold Star-style price drops, but it is vital to do your research before buying. There are a lot of fakes knocking about.

In our eyes, the 1958-on Super Rocket is the best of the bunch, with a stronger crank and improved timing-side main bearing bush (if it hasn't had the SRM treatment). Many A10 owners seem to upgrade their bikes – if you're more concerned with riding pleasure than catalogue-correct appearance, don't be put off from buying a sensibly modified machine. Electronic ignition and 12-volt electrics are popular, while many people upgrade the brakes too.

The personal A10 of SRM's Jon Jolley is an example of just how far you can go without losing the essential soul of the A10. It has a Super Flash engine with an RGS head tuned to virtually RGS specification, though with 8.5:1 compression. "You can't really go much higher with modern fuels without pinking," he says. His bike also features a twin-leading-shoe front brake, five-speed Nova gearbox, Mikuni carbs and makes 42bhp on the dyno.

The real appeal of the BSA A10 is that you don't need to copy Jon's lead to have a bike that's thoroughly rewarding to own and ride. Those sensible prices are only part of the appeal. **CB**



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1984 Honda XLV750R

Today they're called adventure bikes, but 40 years ago we knew them as 'giant trailies'. Can Honda's original Africa-ready big twin turn **Rick's** gaze to distant horizons?

Words **RICK PARKINGTON** Photography **GARY MARGERUM**







heeling our first Honda Africa Twin into the showroom where I used to work, I just didn't get it. Tall, heavy and topped with that massive tank, it was not my idea of an off-roader – you'd be off the thing in seconds on the beach, let alone tackling the Sahara. What was Honda thinking?

Clearly, I got the Africa Twin all wrong. It's a brilliant bike to ride, with much more practicality behind it than I ever imagined. Strictly speaking, of course, this is not an Africa Twin. This is an XLV750R – the original, less refined version of Honda's V-twin dual-purpose machines. It's the more powerful forebear to the 1986 XL600V Transalp, and the 1988 XRV650 Africa Twin and 1990 XRV750 Africa Twin.

The latter two are Honda's best-known twin-cylinder bikes, effectively road-going replicas of the NXR750, the HRC works bike that won the Paris-Dakar Rally for three consecutive years from 1986 to 1988 – but this XLV predates them all.

First shown at the 1982 Paris show, the XLV was Honda's response to the BMW R80 G/S 'giant trailie'. It's a heavy brute and I wouldn't want to push it far in a desert, but the XLV750 would get you from one side of Death Valley to the other in the least possible time, as it's a very lively performer. Power comes in low down and there's plenty of it, while the weight seems to fall away as soon as you get rolling. It doesn't feel so tall either once you're aboard, thanks to compliant long-travel suspension. And huge as the tank looks, at just a couple of pints over four gallons it's not carrying a much greater fuel load than other bikes of its size.

Where the XLV scores in my book is while it would make a good long-distance touring bike – on tarmac, not sand – it hasn't lost touch with the fun aspects of motorcycling. Tourers can easily become luxury cars with two wheels, but by the time the XLV has warmed up I'm gleefully pitching it into bends and squirting it out the other side, getting faster and faster. It's very good at doing it and I'm having a ball – but I have to remind myself that this isn't a 250. It's a big, powerful motorcycle... and I can see this getting out of hand.

To lower the pitch, I divert into a bit of nearby grassland, and again the Honda's weight and height aren't a problem. It's hard to tell how well a bike really copes off road until it all goes wrong, but I think you could enjoy a bit of greenlaning on this 750.

Having spent most of my off-road time on smooth grassland or playing trials rider, greenlanes came into my life more recently. I've learned that, rather than trying to pick your way around obstacles as on a trial, it's often better just to power up and go for it. It's about skimming the peaks rather than trying to negotiate the troughs – that is clearly what the XLV is intended for. Good suspension prevents it getting thrown about too much and stonking power keeps the momentum up, with the impetus aimed at the horizon. The only thing is, at that kind of pace if it does go wrong it'll be messy.

The XLV does have its eccentricities. It takes me a while to find the petrol tap – it's on top of the fuel tank, looking like a twin filler cap. Admittedly it makes sense, as you wouldn't want to be fumbling about under the tank for reserve while bouncing over the desert scrub. The XLV also seems to blast Saharan heat at my legs; overheating problems on early models were solved by fitting the ducted fairing panels below the tank sides,

RIGHT Dash displays dirt bike simplicity (with stick-on mph numbers)

FAR RIGHT Fuel tap is on the top of the fuel tank – try saying that after five pints...



LEFT Hefty beast with a big front wheel and knobbly tyres, but handling is good enough for wanton cornering

RIGHT Deserts might be a bit beyond its abilities but the XLV is perfectly happy on greenlanes



*‘Power comes in low
down the range and
there’s plenty of it’*



Honda's history of dual-sport

1973 The XL250 'Motorsport' – Honda's first on/off-road model – arrives in the UK. It's a four-valve ohc single; later in the year it is joined by a 125cc two-valve trail model, the SL125.

1978 The XL250 engine is upgraded to a twin exhaust-port design and joined by a 500cc version. For 1982 the XL models are restyled and adopt Pro-link rear suspension.

1982 France's Cyril Neveu wins his third Paris Dakar Rally – this time riding a modified XR500 enduro, giving Honda their first victory in this iconic event.

1983 In celebration of the Dakar victory, the shaft-drive XLV750R with a 749cc (79.5 x 75.5mm) V-twin is introduced in continental Europe and Australia/New Zealand – but sadly not the UK.

1984 New radial four-valve control (RFVC) layout is applied to the four-valve XL singles. A 600cc model is also added.

1985 The UK receives its first Paris Dakar replica – the XL600LMF, which has the 600cc RFVC single motor and full Dakar styling – but weak sales see it discontinued later in the year.

1987 The V-twin dual-sports XL600V Transalp is introduced, using a chain-drive version of the successful NTV600 Revere engine in a toned-down Dakar-style chassis with half fairing and luggage capability.

1988 The NX650 Dominator employs similar 'dual-sports' styling to the Transalp, but reverts to a further-enlarged RFVC single motor, producing a model that will survive another 15 years.

1990 The dual-sports 750 V-twin finally reaches UK buyers as the XRV750L Africa Twin, but with a slightly smaller and more oversquare (81 x 72mm) unit displacing 742cc. With various modification, it remains in production until 2001.



Honda's first official 750 V-twin for the UK was the XRV750 Africa Twin, released in 1990

although you'd be glad of it in winter, I suppose.

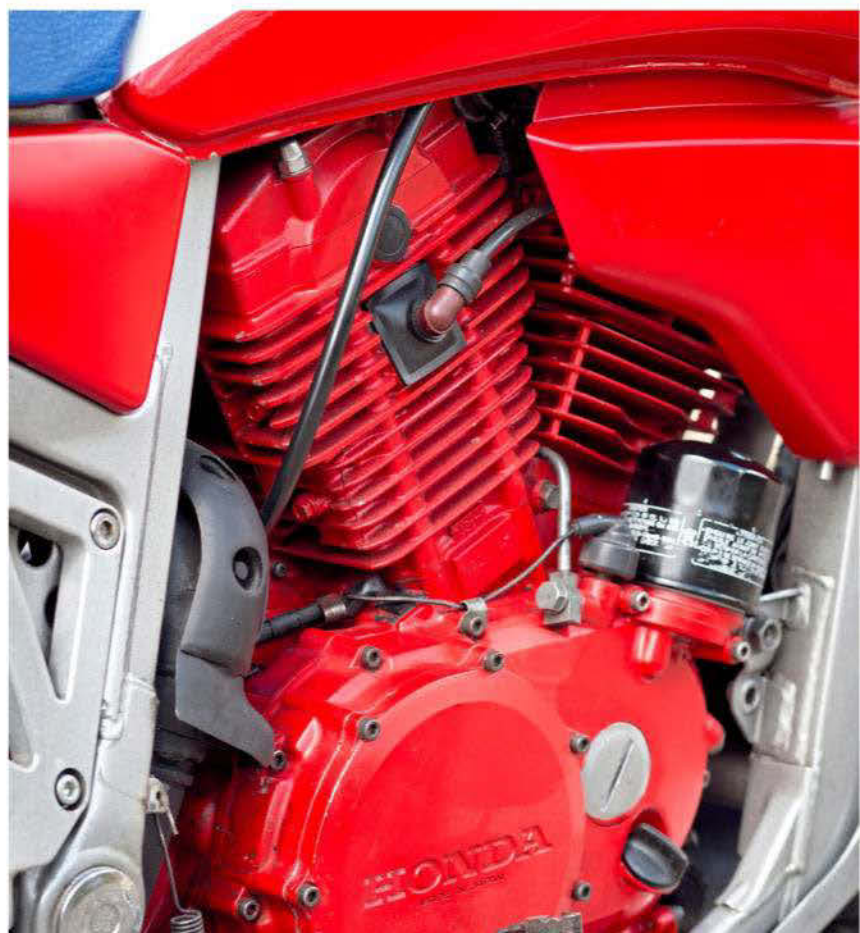
Otherwise, being a fairly modern classic – and a Honda – everything works well. Shaft drive may seem cumbersome, but sand and drive chains don't mix well. The single disc with twin-piston caliper is effective and amply backed-up by a decent rear drum; electrics are good, the clutch is light. But the heartbeat of the three-valves-per-cylinder 749cc motor is very odd. It fires up readily on the button and sits there ticking over nicely with the steady thump of a single... except, of course, this is a V-twin. I initially thought it was only running on one cylinder, but Anthony Godin, who's selling the bike, told me that's just how they sound. It's to do with the crank.

Based on Honda's excellent shaft-drive VT500-cum-NTV600 Revere, the crankshaft differs from conventional V-twin practice. On most, two flywheels are held together by the crankpin, just like a single – but there are two conrods, aimed at two cylinders splayed apart. So that you get an off-beat firing note – ba-boom, ba-boom. For smoothing out power delivery, 90° is a good choice of vee angle, because as one piston is paused while crossing the top or bottom of its stroke, the other is at maximum speed, halfway up. Natural balance. But a 90° V-twin takes up a lot of space, stretching the wheelbase with an inline format, so many compromise with a narrower angle.

On the XLV, the actual vee angle is 45°, but its crank looks more like a parallel twin – each conrod has its own crank pin, either side of a central web, but the pins are slightly offset to each other. This increases the degree gap between firing points beyond the figure determined by the angle of the cylinders, and this is why the XLV sounds unusual.

RIGHT Rick gets close to nature; XLV is better here than expected

BELOW Bright red engine harks back to Honda's 1970s motocrossers – it may not be to all tastes, but it's oh so distinctive





'Off road, the Honda's weight and height aren't a problem'



LEFT Way before its time? Twin high-level pipes – 11 years before the Ducati 916...



LEFT Shaft final drive hints at the influence the breakthrough BMW R80 G/S had three years earlier

It seems to work. It isn't smoother than I expected in terms of vibration – but the power delivery is, impressively so. It's all about shifting the bangs to work in harmony – spreading them between the ups and downs of the pistons. This may seem a bit academic, but for an off-road bike it can help reduce the tendency for engine power pulses to break traction at the rear wheel. Latterly, the offset crank idea has grown in popularity, more commonly now on parallel twins such as the Africa Twin's current incarnation, Hinckley Triumphs, Royal Enfields and many others.

If the XLV engine was ahead of its time when it was introduced in 1983, the fiery red enamelled engine cases of the original model look back to Honda's angry 'Red Rocket' motocrossers of the 1970s. Maybe that goes some way to explain why the original XLV press launch was held at a motocross track in Ibiza – where, it seems, the weight and feisty power of the big twin led to a number of spectacular prangs.

In the absence of other testers to show off to (or a complementary bar), I can imagine that was a more rumbustious day than I'm having. However, I'm finding the Honda surprisingly manageable for its size, which probably goes to show how much trail tyres, riding position and wide bars contribute to riding off road. I can imagine how a works-prepped vision of this behemoth might be the just right tool for a desert rally.



SPECIFICATION | 1984 HONDA XLV750R

ENGINE/TRANSMISSION Type Air-cooled sohc three-valve 45° V-twin with 90° crankpin offset **Dimensions:** 79.5 x 75mm **Capacity** 749cc
Power 61 bhp at 7000rpm **Compression ratio** 8.4:1 **Carburation:** Two Keihin VD 36mm CV **Clutch** Wet multiplate **Gearbox** Five speed
CHASSIS **Frame:** Square-tube twin-downtube cradle **Front suspension** Telescopic forks **Rear suspension** Monoshock with shaft final drive
Brakes Front: Single 276mm disc with twin-piston caliper. Rear: Single-leading-shoe drum **Wheels** Spoked with aluminium alloy rims
Tyres Front: 90/90 x 21. Rear: 130/80 x 17 **DIMENSIONS** Wheelbase 1480mm (58.25in) **Weight** 220kg (484 lb) **PERFORMANCE** 104mph

Few UK riders in the early 1980s would have guessed that we faced the dawn of a new class of motorcycle – ‘dual sports’. Trail bikes had been popular in the UK since the early ’70s, but what on earth was BMW up to with the R80 G/S of 1980? Then Triumph joined in, digging out the scissors and sticky-backed plastic to turn a Bonneville into the surprisingly worthwhile Tiger Trail; desperate for sales, they at least had the excuse of an order from France, where big trailies were becoming popular.

The scale and terrain of the British Isles – England in particular – made low weight and agility the most desirable assets for anything with off-road aspirations, so nobody here would buy a bike like these... but we were missing the fact that giant trail bikes, kitted out for the job, make great tourers. They’re comfortable, sitting you well up off the road where you can see and be seen – and at your destination, removing the luggage revealed a fun and versatile bike underneath.

On top of that, it was a changing world. Coverage of the Paris Dakar – and its boom in popularity – helped

make the idea of more extreme bike holidays attractive. Of course, Ewan and Charlie’s 2004 adventures kicked ‘adventure bikes’ to stellar levels of popularity, but if you look back to the Dakar replicas of the mid-1980s you’ll see the beginnings of where we are today.

That’s one reason the XLV makes a really good classic choice – it has an interesting place in history. Yet it’s also a very competent machine, won’t be any bother and is great fun to ride – which, if I’m honest, is my problem with it. I may have finally learned after all these years that these big Dakar models make far more sense than I thought at the time, but the 750 is just a bit too much of a party animal for me. It’s like riding a DT125 with a bloody great engine – and way too much fun for my own good.

As it was never officially imported, the XLV750 isn’t a common bike in the UK. But I can see the more common XRV750 Africa Twin is probably just as much fun. I’ll leave you to find that out; I’m off to pinball-launch myself through a few more curves and hand this one back before I get myself into trouble...

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Museum Live 2025

The National Motorcycle Museum's annual free festival of all that's good on two wheels is back. It's a must

Make sure you don't miss the action on the main stage in the Britannia Suite. It's free to get in (like the whole event), with six entertaining sessions to enjoy over the weekend. First up, at 10.15am on both mornings, is journalist and artist Rachael Clegg, perhaps best known for her *TT Milestones* calendar and book. Sharing the stage with Rachael will be the fastest ever woman around the TT course, Jenny Tinnmouth.

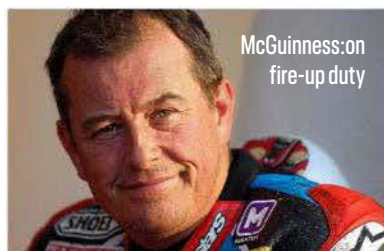
Jenny, who is also a film stunt rider and former BSB regular, will be sharing some fascinating insights into a life lived at full throttle. She'll be joined by MCN editor Emma Franklin and journalist Saffron Wilson, who'll be lifting the lid on what goes into creating the world's favourite weekly motorcycle paper.

Steve Plater takes over the stage at 11am, to introduce

the irrepressible Henry Cole and his TV troupe of Allen Millyard and Guy 'Skid' Willison. They'll host a mix of machine fire-ups, an update on the restoration of the Norton Nemesis V8 – and on their attempt to better the current V8 motorcycle speed record of 136mph on the bike – as well as exclusive previews of Henry's latest online project, themotorbikeshow.com

After a quick break for lunch, Henry and friends will be back on the main stage with an extended show, featuring Honda Racing UK riders and TT legends John McGuinness and Dean Harrison. They'll be revealing all about life inside the race paddock and some of their greatest races.

Henry will also be sharing footage – including some of the out-takes – from some recent shows. It'll be a great watch – leading to the finale of the session, when John and Dean fire up a couple of their race bikes.



McGuinness: on fire-up duty



Race tales from Dean Harrison



Jenny Tinnmouth: TT hero onstage



Norton double act

Two **Norton** prototypes are set to wow the crowds at Museum Live

There's a double dose of extreme Norton at Museum Live, with an update on the Nemesis V8 restoration project from engineer extraordinaire Allen Millyard. Allen will be reporting on progress during his twice-daily live appearances on the main stage, where the 1500cc Nemesis will be on display – and hopefully fired up. Already, the bike has recorded a top speed of 110mph with the engine pulling at 8000rpm – and Allen is confident there's plenty more to come. Fingers crossed for the record.

Brian Crighton and test rider Bob Rowley from the factory's original rotary

The original 1987 rotary racer and (inset) Alan getting his first taste of the V8





WORDS GEZ KANE PHOTOGRAPHY BAUER ARCHIVE: HONDA, NMM, MICK DUCKWORTH

Henry Cole will bring his unique brand of motorcycling passion - and show some TV out-takes

Testing, testing...

Head out into the roads of rural Warwickshire on the latest bikes from **BSA** and **Royal Enfield**

Don't just come to look - you can put yourself in the hot seat, with both BSA and Royal Enfield offering test rides over the weekend. You'll have to book at the BSA and Royal Enfield road test stands outside and show your licence, but what an opportunity to check out the best of the retro classic scene.

BSA will be bringing their new-for-2025 Scrambler and Bantam models for Museum Live visitors to sample. The Scrambler is based on the popular and successful 652cc Gold Star single and brings a dash of off-road style to the party, without sacrificing anything in terms of performance and practicality. Come on down and see what all the fuss is about.

And, bringing back the most popular model name in BSA's illustrious history, the new 334cc Bantam looks set to inspire a whole new generation of motorcyclists. It blends accessibility, fun and rugged simplicity with a tempting introductory price tag of just £3499. Could this be your next bike? Make your mind up at Museum Live.

Royal Enfield have been in the retro/classic market for a long time now. Their classic-style 650 twins and 350 singles have won plenty of hearts among riders who value traditional motorcycling virtues like simplicity, character, reliability and old-fashioned good value. They'll be bringing a truckload of their latest models to win over a few more fans, including the Bullet 350, HNTR 350, Guerrilla 450, Bear 650, Continental GT 650, Super Meteor 650... and others besides. Quite a selection.

So don't forget your (full motorcycle) licence and riding kit - and make sure you sign up early for the chance to sample some of the latest offerings from two of the best-known names in the retro motorcycle business. Bear in mind that test ride spaces are limited - test rides will be on a first come, first served basis throughout both days.



racer development team will be available to chat about the rotary race years in the Torque Zone in the museum foyer from 10am to 12 midday, and 2pm to 4pm on both days. They'll be bringing the original 1987 prototype racer - a truly remarkable machine.

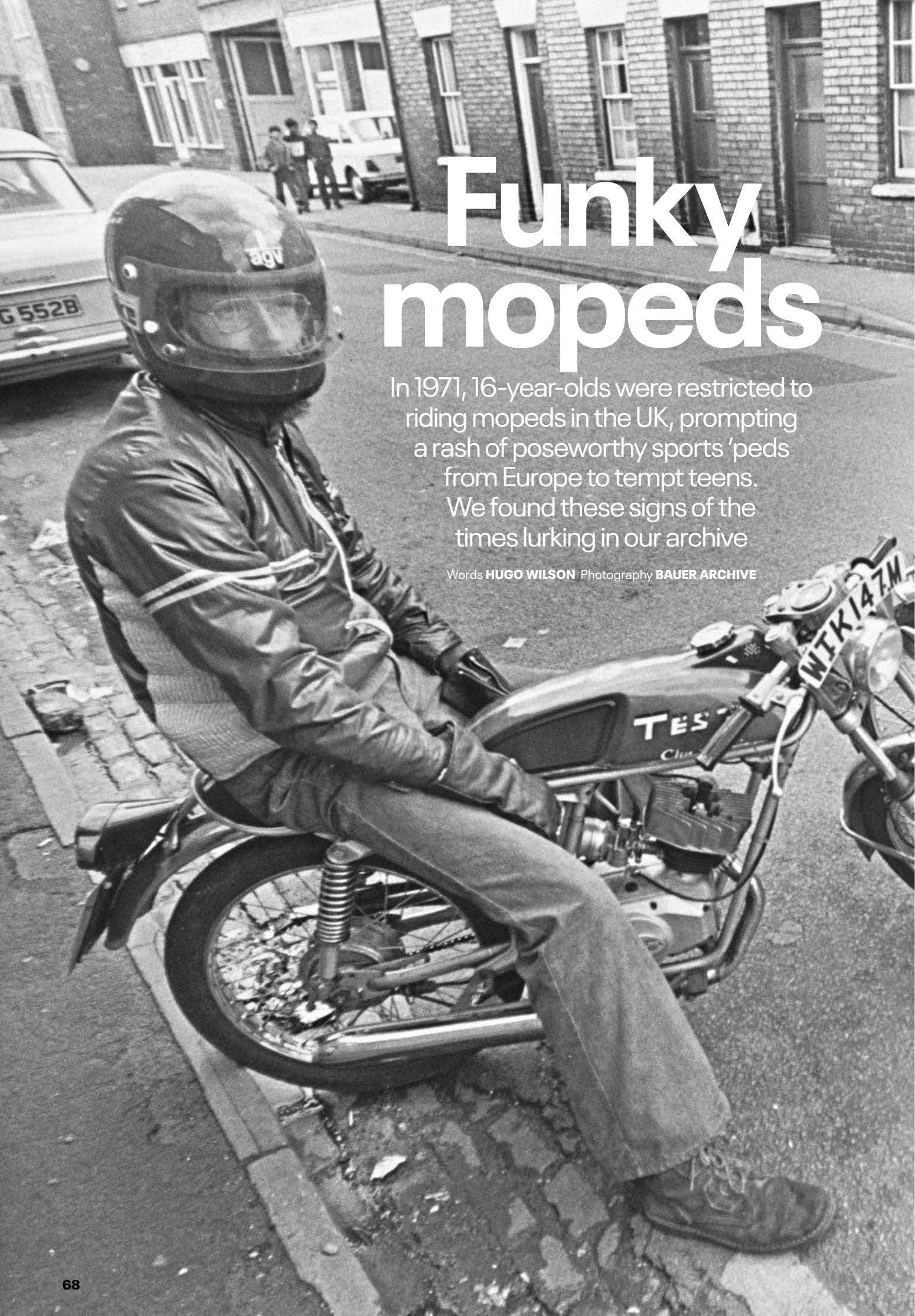
Brian was a service engineer at Norton's Shenstone factory when the new rotaries were attracting orders from UK police forces. Convinced the 85bhp twin-rotor air-cooled engine was capable of much more, he persuaded management to let him experiment with tuning a crashed police bike. The results have become part of Norton folklore, with Brian's makeshift racer pumping out over 120bhp and hitting 170mph.

While power wasn't a problem, the handling of the converted police bike rolling chassis certainly was. Test rider Bob Rowley christened the machine 'Waltzing Walter' because of its wayward behaviour under full power. But the bike was the start of something special and Norton rotaries would go on to rack up success after success - notably at the TT - until changes in racing regulations effectively outlawed the bikes in 1995.

Don't miss the chance to get a close-up look at the bike that started the rotary revolution - and talk to two of the men who created it.



Have a ride on BSA's new Scrambler and Bantam



Funky mopeds

In 1971, 16-year-olds were restricted to riding mopeds in the UK, prompting a rash of poseworthy sports 'peds from Europe to tempt teens. We found these signs of the times lurking in our archive

Words **HUGO WILSON** Photography **BAUER ARCHIVE**



Testi Champion 50 and Batavus 50 Mk4S

In the early '70s, the sight of a pair of exotic Euro mopeds like this on a British street would draw the interest of the local youth faster than someone offering free Curly Wurlys. That's clearly the case here, with the white-shirted teen over the road enjoying a good gawp and fantasising about turning up at the gates of the local comprehensive on one of these.

The Sachs-engined Batavus was capable of 45.59mph, while the Minarelli-powered Testi scraped past the mythical

(for mopeds) 50mph barrier by 0.39mph. We know this because this shot is from a *Bike* magazine test of the 'peds in November 1974, during which they were speed tested.

The Testi featured a double-sided Grimeca front drum brake, while the less powerful Batavus had an electronic rev counter and indicators. Either would have been cool for school, but both were rare on UK roads, being significantly more expensive than a Honda SS50 or Yamaha FS1-E.

Motobécane Sport 50 Mk2

When the government introduced the law restricting 16-year-olds to 50cc mopeds in December 1971, this is probably what they expected the youth of the day to be using on the school run. It's basically a Mobylette twist-and-go 'ped, but with a Motobécane-badged motorcycle-style fuel tank and seat mounted on the pressed steel frame.

In the summer of '72, with Alice Cooper's *School's Out on Top of the Pops*, that seemed realistic, and the 30mph wannabe motorbike might have actually impressed some of the girls who'd joined you to enjoy a cheeky Number Six (or something else) behind the bike shed. But that was before the arrival of the Yamaha FS1-E and the Italian alternatives.

Pretty quickly, the Motobécane was looking distinctly dowdy, so the factory introduced a fancy version with a high-level pipe and knobbles – but also, for the faux *Easy Rider* effect, a sissy bar. They didn't make it any faster. Here we see the bike being ridden by smartly-attired Mark, possibly on his way to a job interview.



'According to bike shed banter, the Tiger Cross was faster than a Fizzy'



Puch Grand Prix Supreme

In the '70s, Austrian manufacturer Puch dominated the UK step-thru market with their twist-and-go Maxi, but they also did a nice line in high-quality sports mopeds too. At the top of their range in 1976 was the black and gold, disc-braked and cast wheel-equipped Grand Prix Supreme, retailing at a salty £299.

Pictured with this 'ped are Puch's UK boss John Moore (left) multi-world champion Phil Read (and his Roller) and a young Damon Hill (on the Puch). The picture is dated September 1976, so Damon's just turned 16 and is looking forward to two-wheeled freedom. He's wearing a snappy Embassy Hill Racing jacket, from the merchandise collection of his dad Graham's Formula One team – but the wind resistance from those flares must have slowed the GP by a few mph. He later went on to faster things.



Fantic Chopper

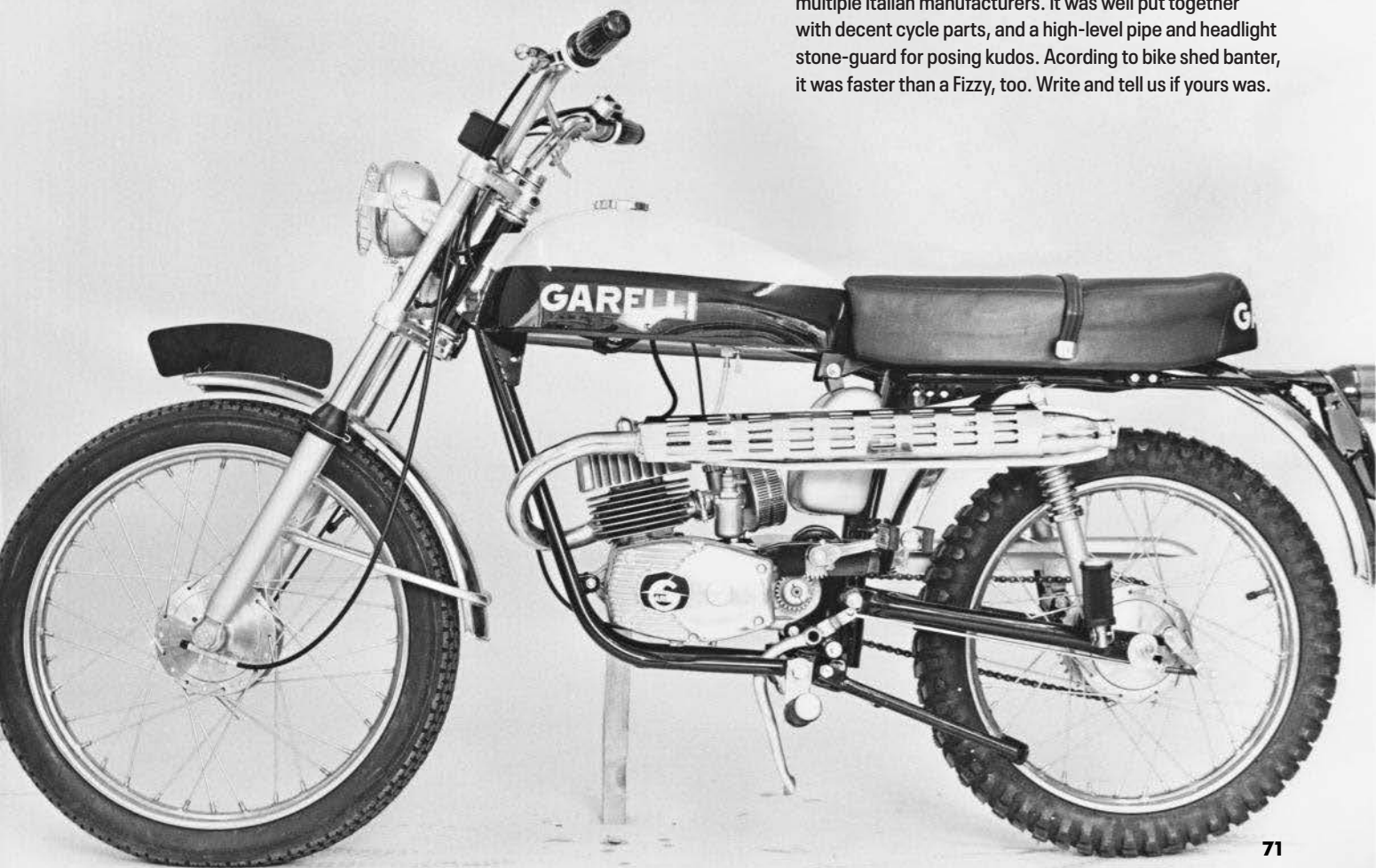
❑ Back in the '70s, the Fantic Chopper 50 was (rightly) an object of ridicule for most motorcycle riders, including the 16-year-olds who were meant to aspire to this Italian version of the American Dream. The looks of the Fantic were inspired by Peter Fonda's laid-back and raked-out Harley from the 1969 film *Easy Rider*, but the incessant wail of the Minarelli engine, flat-out at a not-exactly-giddy 35mph, rather spoilt the freewheelin' vibe. It was more bad than bad-ass. Plus, in 1972 the Chopper cost £280, which was the same as a brand new Honda CB175.

Likely they were only bought by out-of-touch parents to indulge their impressionable offspring. Now, of course, it's a cult classic. Fantic's other 50cc offerings, including the off-road style Caballero, were genuinely desirable.

Garelli Tiger Cross

❑ It's a long time ago, but we remember the yellow and black Garelli Tiger Cross as being the most common challenger to Yamaha FS1-E dominance in this impressionable market – at least until the arrival of the Suzuki AP50. The European demand for sporty 50cc machines was already established when Britain restricted 16-year-olds to mopeds, so Italian manufacturers just had to rig up Heath Robinson-style pedalling attachments for their bikes and were ready to claim a slice of the pie.

This looks like a publicity shot of a hastily-assembled bike with a road tyre on the front and a knobbly on the rear, and is that brake pedal on upside down? Note the pedal arrangement separate from the footrests, with quadrant gear to allow the pedals to function as a kickstart. The engine was a Minarelli with a five-speed 'box, as used by multiple Italian manufacturers. It was well put together with decent cycle parts, and a high-level pipe and headlight stone-guard for posing kudos. According to bike shed banter, it was faster than a Fizzy, too. Write and tell us if yours was.



Jawa Mustang

■ There's no date on this shot we found in the archive – but judging by the look of the impressionable 16-year-old rider, we'd date it to 1980, when the similarly-attired Dexy's Midnight Runners were top of the pops. The Jawa didn't appear on the UK market until after the 1977 law change that restricted mopeds to a 30mph top speed and ended the farcical fitting of pedals with which they could (theoretically) be propelled. Naming a 49cc moped after a wild horse, an American muscle car or a famous WWII fighter plane is a bold move – the Jawa, with its 3.5bhp engine and three-speed transmission, probably struggled to match the spirited performance of its namesakes. Fitting a fairing didn't help. The headlight turned with the forks and shone its feeble six-volt beam through a Perspex window in the streamlining – but it'd still only just wheeze past 30mph. At £300 in 1981, it wasn't a lot cheaper than Japanese opposition and was never a significant seller.

Malaguti Monte

■ This image, of a Malaguti Monte failing to make it up stairs of a terraced house in Peterborough, was taken for a feature on alternative winter entertainments in *Bike* magazine's December 1977 issue. Maybe it was the same machine that was speed tested by *Motor Cycle Mechanics* the previous October at an improbable 55mph. Small-capacity trail bikes were a big thing in the '70s, and there were a bunch of Italian 'peds for 16-year-olds who wanted the off-road look. Most of them used Minarelli engines.

'Small-capacity trail bikes were a big thing in the '70s'





Simson S50

❑ The Simson S50 was sold as an MZ in the UK, but was actually made in a different factory to the more famous (and larger capacity) East German two-strokes. It looks like both marques shared the same design office, though – the enclosed chain, elongated silencer and left-foot kickstart were MZ features, too. Simson had a long history and made BMW-inspired shaft-drive 250cc singles after WWII, but shifted to small-capacity two-strokes in 1955. The 50cc Schwalbe (Swallow) scooter was made in huge numbers and is now a cult item, while 80cc off-road bikes achieved ISDT success. The S50 had a three-speed gearbox, a claimed 3.8bhp at 5500rpm and weighed 77kg (171lb). Top speed was 37mph (allegedly). Our test rider is clearly in need of a cup of tea to sooth his nerves after an exciting ride. And is that the Chelsea Bridge Tea Hut? Write and tell us.



KTM Comet

❑ This photograph from our archive, dated 1974 and apparently taken at the factory, shows a Comet bolted to a rolling road, unusually fitted with an engine from Austrian manufacturers Puch. The close proximity of a beer bottle with a large mallet on the work bench reflects the reassuring Teutonic work practices of the time. Possibly it's a pre-production test, as the model available in the UK was powered by a 47cc two-stroke motor produced by Sachs in Germany, with a four-speed gearbox. The latter was the specification for the machine tested in *Bike* magazine's October/November 1973 test, which featured the off-road-styled Comet Cross. Moped production was KTM's mainstay in the early '60s, with motocrossers only being developed from around 1967. They didn't make their own engines until much later. **CB**

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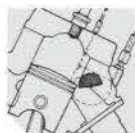
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‘It all came from a hobby getting out of hand’

Joe Tinley (right) started tinkering with old British bikes as a kid thanks to his dad John (left). Joe ended up making it his full-time job and now Toolbox Lifestyle is a thriving firm specialising in Matchless and AJS

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY **GREG MOSS**





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Knowledge

All about powervalves



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Project bikes

TR6C, RD200DX and more



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Brit Bike Basics

Rick P looks at rear suspension

Matchless G80RR: The Holy Grail

Joe (right) with dad John and a Matchless G80RR. "This is dad's bike," says Joe. "It's very rare – they only made 50. We brought it back from the US during Covid. We've restored it to how it would have been raced – it's a flat-track US-market-only 1957 competition bike with a rigid chassis and no front brake. When bikes started going out to the States, they were the ones who got into tuning them, and then told the factory over here what they'd done afterwards. It really is a holy grail bike – and not just if you're into AJS and Matchless. Not a lot of people know about them." Over the years, Joe and his father have amassed a collection of special bikes including some that have made TV appearances. "We have a Norton Big 4 sidecar which is super rare; I think there are four in the country. For the VE celebrations this year I drove Zoe Ball onstage in the sidecar.

We also use it for ragging around."





Toolbox Lifestyle is a classic and custom bike business in Maidenhead specialising in AJS and Matchless. “And parts,” adds owner Joe Tinley, surrounded by a treasure trove of spares.

Joe has been riding and working on classic bikes since he was four and has a soft spot for Matchless. “We own quite a few special Matchlesses. I’ve just bought another couple this week – a US-market-only 600cc Typhoon, and a copy of an RR (see opening spread for a real one).

“I got into it because of my dad, and

‘A Matchless 500 single is quite something. I prefer them to Triumphs’

I’ve grown to love Matchless competition singles – they’re under-valued and I prefer them to Triumphs. A 500cc single-cylinder Matchless is quite something to ride.”

Joe is keen to pass on his love and knowledge of classics to the next generation, to help keep the scene alive. “I always try to sell to younger people and help them along the way. It’s difficult for a younger generation to learn about classics; it’s all a bit secretive.” Joe hopes to change that. toolboxlifestyle.com

Fixing and selling wartime Brits

“This is my main workshop – we have a unit for all the stock. That’s a customer’s Bonneville T120R I’m working on – it came in with a wiring issue and it needs a carburation tune, too. The Matchless in the foreground is interesting – it’s a 1938 Model X 1000cc V-twin that belongs to a good friend whose grandfather was one of the founding people at Matchless.” As well as spannering, Joe’s a salesman too. “I sold a G80CS earlier this week, plus a G3L WD wartime Matchless which is going to Holland, and a wartime WNG Ariel which someone in the UK bought and took over to Arnhem. Around 95% of our bikes go abroad. I’m doing less competition stuff, but the military bike market is still strong.”



My grandfather’s Norton International

“This bike is very special to me – it’s my grandfather’s Norton International. He was blown out of a tank at the beginning of the war and spent five years in a POW camp. When he got back and got off the train, instead of going straight to his parents he went to the local bike shop – but all they had was a small BSA. Two weeks later, they got a very lovely Norton International, which he bought. After he died, my dad found a photo showing the numberplate, so we put an advert in some classifieds and someone said: ‘I own it’. We went to see it and they let me ride it, but it wasn’t for sale. Then, six years later, the bloke contacted my dad and he sneakily went and bought it, then showed it to me and mum.”



Pistons, pistons, pistons

“These range from WD up to Typhoon, the big 90mm competition pistons. STD is the standard one, then they go up by 20. When they start to wear, you go up a piston size before you have to get it re-sleeved.”

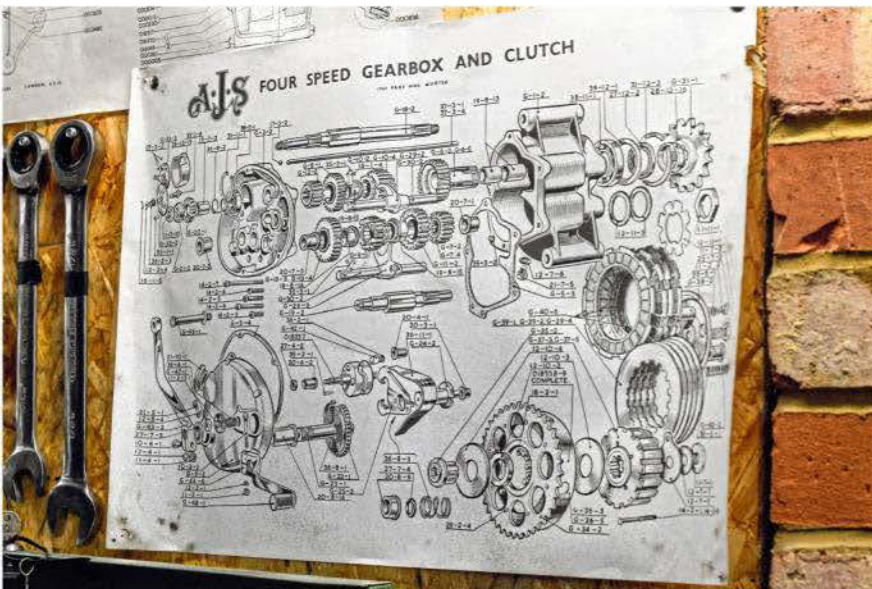


Lever trees

“If you drop a bike, the first thing to bend are the levers. So if we see ball-ended clutch and brake levers at autojumbles, we buy them. This [the parts side of the business] has all come from a hobby getting out of hand – it was never designed as a business, but it’s turned into that.”

Blown-up ‘box

“This is a blown-up image of a Burman gearbox from a parts book. We use old manuals a lot – if I’m asked to work on something unusual (for me) I’ll buy the manuals and books. For example, I’ve got two BSAs on the bench at the moment – I explained to the owners that I could do it, but I’d have to learn along the way.”



My best bikes

Joe Tinley’s two-wheeled favourites – and what they taught him



Matchless WD G3L

“This is my bike that dad built for me when I started riding and was getting into this sort of stuff. He found it as a project, but it was so bad we chucked nearly everything away – about the only thing from the original bike is the rear brake lever. The rest was bought new or came from our stock.”



AJS Typhoon

“This is my ‘59 Typhoon, which is super rare. It’s what my dad gave me when I passed my bike test. All my friends had modern bikes and I was riding that – my best mate had a Kawasaki Z750. It’s only recently, from doing what I do, that I’ve realised how rare the Typhoon is.”



Triumph Street Triple 675

“This was my first modern bike. I think it was a 2007 model. I learnt a lot about riding faster bikes on it, but had to sell it because I was going to hurt myself. Now I’m older and wiser, it would be fine – but for someone in their early 20s it was a rocket. I did some speeds on that...”



The competition shelf

❑ "This is our shelf of Matchless competition barrels, heads and rocker boxes. They're hard to find, so once you print this I predict people will start contacting us! We've amassed them over the years - I race two competition bikes, so if anything goes bang we need spares."

World War II safety device

❑ "This is a Matchless G3L WWII blackout mask. The yellow is anti-gas paint that changes colour when gas is present to tell you to put your mask on - but I think by the time you saw it, you'd have changed colour! We've got two tins of original paint."



Useful things

Just some of the essential items in Joe's workshop



Snap-on ratchet screwdriver set

Cost: £140 Where: snapon.co.uk

"This is my favourite tool and I use it every day. As everyone knows, Snap-on tools are really high quality and I love using it." If you want to go for a less expensive version, Teng Tools do a similarly comprehensive set for £55 (toolden.co.uk).



Brass hammer

Cost: Unknown Where: Inherited

"I think these were intended for hitting things without causing a spark. I've got a copper one too, which is softer so you can hit things without damaging them." Brass mallets are available for £30-40 (ewequipment.co.uk), with copper ones about the same price.



Customised spanner

Cost: Pennies Where: Self-made

"This is a spanner I've ground the sides off to fit in a tight space. You have to make stuff to do the job required, something which is quite common in the classic bike world. This particular one is for the feed and return oil-union on a Matchless, which is really hard to get into."



In the Matchless stores

"These are new old stock wartime parts, still wrapped up in the grease and boxes. They're very hard to find. I have a friend and a customer who was going to a rally this weekend, and he called me up, saying: 'I've stripped the threads on my 1942 [G3L] rear wheel axle, have you got one?' I said yes, so he drove up from Kent and picked it up. I don't think anyone else could do that. We've been collecting for many, many years and when we see stuff for sale, we buy it for the future."



Parts sales are booming

▣ "Overall, I'm doing a lot more in the parts department these days. I've sold £1000-worth of parts this week - to India and all over the rest of the world. I do what I can to make money, and to keep doing what I enjoy - I used to work in finance so obviously this is very different, but it gives me the freedom to look after my kids and do something fun. It's all down to my dad and granddad. My mum would call it a disease - my dad infected me with classic bike virus!"

Mind your bonce

▣ "These are kickstarters and gearshift levers for AJS and Matchless bikes. On the left are girder-fork parts and sidestands. If you want a case of concussion, pop in. Every time I go in there, I bang my head!"



Next month

Vincent specialists Conway Motors

Powervalves

What you need to know

The first variable timing systems offered on internal combustion engines, powervalves were designed to allow your two-stroke to be both tractable and exciting. Here are the essentials on what they consist of, the different systems and how they function

Photography: **BAUER**

Alan Seeley



'Don't assume that powervalves are maintenance-free components. They need correct adjustment and operation to keep your two-stroke zinging as it should.'

In two-stroke engines, the induction and exhaust processes are inextricably linked when it comes to eking out optimum performance. How and when the exhaust gases depart the engine have a major impact on engine efficiency in terms of helping to pull in the new charge of fuel and air on the induction side.

On an old-school two-stroke, peak riding excitement comes when the bike 'comes on pipe' – the Kadenacy effect (also referred to as the point of cadence), where induction and exhaust are co-operating at peak efficiency. The bike then remains briefly in the powerband as the revs rise before another gear must be selected.

The problem for two-stroke engine designers and tuners was setting the on-pipe point in the best place for an engine's application. Exhaust timing is dictated by the height of the exhaust port in the cylinder wall; that is, when it is obscured or opened by the rising and falling piston. The optimum height of the exhaust port is different at various engine speeds, as indeed is its size and that of the exhaust/expansion chamber. Being made in metal, these sizes and positions are fixed.

If only there were a way to vary port height, size and shape, as well as effective expansion chamber volume, to meet the varying demands placed on an engine. Enter the powervalve and a whole new world of acronyms...

Yamaha Power Valve System (YPVS)

As with many genius motorcycling innovations, Yamaha's YPVS was born out of competition. Yamaha added a

powervalve system to the OW35 500GP bike to create the OW35K in late 1977, on which Johnny Cecotto won the Finnish and Czech GPs that year. We all know what Kenny Roberts did with it the following year. YPVS appeared on the YZ125 and YZ250 motocrossers in 1982, and the following year reached the RD250 and 350LC YPVS road bikes. It would also feature later on the 125s and 500s as well as the DT, TZR and TDR models.

The YPVS system uses a rotary valve operated by cables and an electronic motor on Yamahas with a battery (it was operated mechanically by a centrifugal device on the crank on battery-less competition bikes). At low rpm, the valve is closed, lowering the height of the port's top edge. This makes for better performance at the bottom end. Using info about engine speed from the ignition unit and valve position from a potentiometer in the servo motor, the system instructs the valve to rotate to a more open position as the revs rise. This raises the effective height of the exhaust port for better high-rpm operation.

Kawasaki Integrated Powervalve System (KIPS)

Another powervalve system to come from competition, KIPS was first seen on the 1984 KX125 factory motocrosser, debuting on production machinery the following year.

The basic iteration of the system uses rack-and-pinion mechanically-operated valves in subports either side of the main exhaust port. The left-side valve accesses a resonator chamber.

At low engine speeds, the valves remain shut to shorten the duration of the exhaust port. Exhaust gases are able to enter the resonator chamber via the left-side valve, effectively increasing the volume of the expansion chamber and lowering exhaust port height to the benefit of low-end torque.

As engine speed increases, the valves open to expose the subports and close off the resonator chamber, reducing expansion chamber volume and raising exhaust port height, enhancing higher-speed running.

The system evolved to allow the valves to open in opposite directions and include



This is what does the job. The valve element of YPVS is simple and fabulously effective at the same time

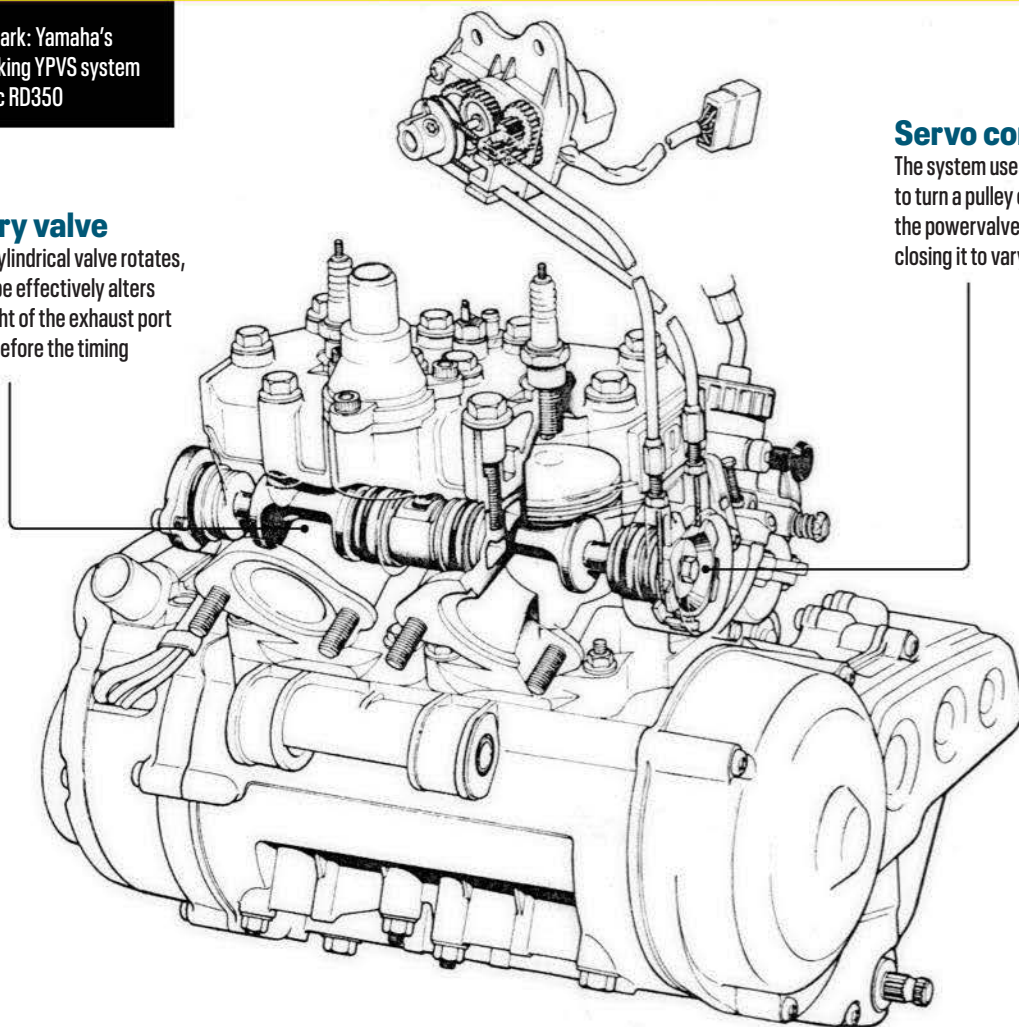
The benchmark: Yamaha's groundbreaking YPVS system on the iconic RD350

Rotary valve

As the cylindrical valve rotates, the shape effectively alters the height of the exhaust port and therefore the timing

Servo control

The system uses a servo motor to turn a pulley on the end of the powervalue, opening or closing it to vary port height



a flat exhaust powervalue at the front edge of the port. The valves were also refined with bleed cutouts to further improve low-speed running as well as starting on Kawasaki's larger strokers.

In its E-KIPS iteration, as found on the KR-1S and others, the valves were electronically motor-driven.

Honda Automatically-controlled Torque Amplification Chamber (ATAC)

Honda developed their two-stroke tech to be competitive in motocross and the all-important 500GPs. In 1982, the first year of the V3 two-stroke NS500 GP bike, there was no powervalue system. For 1983 there was ATAC on the NS and Freddie Spencer used all of his talent to exploit the GP bike to the max.

ATAC functions in a similar way to KIPS. A centrifugal mechanical governor on the crank drives a rack-and-pinion system to open the ATAC valve onto a resonance chamber, the Honda Energy Resonance Pipe (HERP). Again, the chamber is open at low speeds and closed at high speeds. This is the system found on road bikes such as the NS400R.

Honda's powervalue activities became more sophisticated in the Honda RC-Valve set-up – 'RC' standing for 'Revolution

'Enter the powervalue and a new world of acronyms...'

Control'. RC-Valve uses a computer to keep tabs on engine revs and uses an electronic servo motor to activate a two-blade exhaust valve. It was deployed on various models including the NSR125 and 250.

Suzuki Automatic Exhaust Timing Control (AETC)

Another variation on the theme, AETC uses a system of blade-type valves typically actuated by motor-driven cables on the road bikes like the RGV and mechanically on off-rovers like the RM250.

The first version was known simply as Suzuki Automatic Exhaust Control (SAEC). Once again the system was race derived, and a memorable feature of the 1985 RG500 road bike.

AETC systems were developed in both two- and three-blade versions – the RGV250 VJ21 getting the former and the VJ22 benefiting from the latter. As usual, the object is to lower exhaust port height

at lower rpm for tractability, and raise it as the engine speed rises for power.

Keeping them turning

Powervvalues operate in an environment of extreme heat, exacerbated by carbon build-up. Quality modern synthetic and even semi-synthetic two-stroke oils do much to slow the accumulation of deposits. But you still need to keep on top of top-end maintenance to ensure their longevity.

Yamaha's YPVS is the most common system, and also suffers from road dirt being flung from the front wheel. On twins this builds in the poorly protected area between the barrels, and expensive valves and bushes suffer. Check cable tension and that the valve is aligned correctly.

With Honda's NS400R, make sure the ATAC chambers open and close as and when they should (they're only on the front two cylinders of the V3). The linkages for Kawasaki's KIPS can give issues on a KR-1S, so always check for smooth operation and that the rods aren't misshapen. On Suzuki's AETC there can be problems with wear and part failure that allow the blades to come out.

The most important thing with all systems is external cleanliness. Keeping servo motors, cables and linkages working smoothly should be a routine service task.

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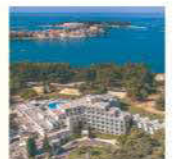
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The workshop
PROJECT TR6



Crankshaft is the heart of any engine rebuild – and with a limited budget, it's Rick's priority number one

A right crank

Last month, Rick explored what had caused Tony Cull's **Triumph TR6C** engine to give its former owner such trouble. This month, the question is how to stop it happening again

Rick Parkington 1970 Triumph TR6C



'When I started out, I worried that being self-taught meant I wasn't up to doing proper rebuilds. But as you get older, you find out how well your work stands the test of time – and learn from your mistakes.'

It's said that there's more than one way to skin a cat. Maybe, but there are certainly a number of ways to build old engines. Some insist on a surgical approach, others seem to manage any old how, but one thing is certain – you need something more than new parts and a manual.

Meriden Triumph's methods – and in some cases its tooling and workforce – dated from the 1930s. At that time, standards were upheld by skilled 'fitters'

who used experience and feel as much as measurement to match parts of varying tolerance together – just as it had always been done in a world where apprenticeship led to a job for life. But post-war, Japan had to rebuild its industry with new machinery – its greater accuracy removed the need for skilled fitters, making assembly cheaper, faster and open to automation.

That's why, with old British engines, it's not just a matter of throwing money at parts – experience and feel count too, and we all have our own ideas.

I spoke to owner Tony Cull and he agreed that, as it's had a hard life, it made no sense to spend a fortune on his Triumph engine – better just try to make it into a reliable motor he can use. Having built all of my own bikes on a budget, I hope my experience can achieve the right result.

In my version of 'cat-skinning', the priority is the crankshaft. It does the most work, is hardest to access and the consequences of failure are disastrous – so when funds are limited, I spend them there. With the crankcases away for welding, this month I'm concentrating on the crank and big ends.

Where possible, I use original parts; Triumph's decades of experience meant they knew what material to use. Yes, some repro parts are higher spec, but I prefer to buy from people who use them in rebuilds than trust advertising claims. I was pleased to find some original shells; these engines are usually easy on big-end wear, so old stock of the -20 undersize we needed still exists. Next month, I hope the cases will be back and the crank can go back where it belongs!



1 Money in the crank

The crankshaft is the most important part of the engine. Failure here – of the big end or main bearings – spells disaster. On top of that, it's the hardest part to access, so it's worthy of the most attention.



2 Big end buffeting

Shadowy stripes across the big end probably came from faint chatter on the last regrind. It's not detectable by touch and the old big ends were OK, so I polished them off with worn-smooth emery strip.



3 Sludge trap ready...

I order a new centrifugal filter 'sludge trap' tube and plug before starting; they're cheap and rarely come out undamaged. Threads are Cycle pre-1969, UNF after that; being 1970, this bike needs UNF.



4 Slide it in

When pressing in the tube, get it the right way up; the single large hole needs to face outward for the locating bolt. I mark a felt pen centre line that I can see through the hole, to check it's going to line up.



5 All lined up

There, spot on. The last bit usually needs gently tapping home; while not very tight, it's hard to shift about once installed. The holes need to line up neatly to prevent the bolt crushing the tube.



6 Easy on the Loctite

Loctite's strong stuff; I don't use more than a single drop when fitting the bolt or it can be very hard to remove again. You also don't want any surplus running down the hole into the sludge trap, so use sparingly.



7 One to avoid

Don't risk cracking the bolt through overtightening; use a torque wrench. This one had been strained and flew out of my BSA A10 crank at speed – messy. Now it hangs from my jacket zipper.



8 Keep the oilway clear

Be careful fitting the plug, too. Originally locked by dot punching, Loctite is less damaging to the crank – but don't overdo it. You don't want anything getting into this oil supply, just inboard of the threads.



9 Magnetic attraction

I always trial-fit the plug. The new thread sometimes attracts dirt out of the crank threads – you don't want that stuff floating about inside. Use a magnet to collect metal dust and clean carefully.



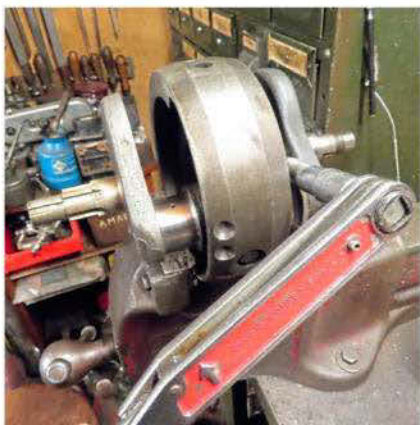
10 Shelling out

Clean the conrod bores and backs of the shells scrupulously and snap them into place, making sure the tags locate in their notches and the shells settle evenly - and aren't rising proud of the split.



12 The best bolts

Unlike modern engines with 'stretch' type bolts, the originals were intended to be re-used. Personally, I prefer old factory bolts to potentially-suspect replacements like these, which seem too long.



14 Torque show

Then torque up the nuts evenly - each side a bit at a time. It's not unusual for the rod to tighten up as you do this, but at full torque it should free off and the rod should swing under its own weight.



11 Getting paired up

Conrods and caps are dot-punched to match them up as pairs. Usually, one rod has a single dot, the other a pair. You can't substitute a mismatch if a cap or rod is damaged - always replace as a pair.



13 Rocking rod

Oil the shells and assemble the conrods on the crank. Press the cap firmly home to retain the shells, then evenly (and lightly) tighten up the nuts, rocking the rod to make sure everything still feels OK.



15 Play time

Ideally, if you test the side-play of the conrod, the big end will slide on the journal with no trace of rocking. Finally, pump some oil into the end of the crank to prime the sludge trap, in preparation for fitting.

Three things...



Home-made vice jaws

To work on the crank, you need to hold it securely in the vice without damaging it. Cut a couple of lengths of aluminium angle to make 'soft jaws' so you can grip the flywheel tight without leaving vice marks.



Torque wrench

A torque wrench is essential for bolts like these that must be tight, but not strained. If you don't have torque figures in the manual, use generic ones for bolt diameters from engineering books.



Cellulose thinner

I use cellulose thinner for cleaning oil or protective grease from things like bearing shells or big end bolts. It dries quickly without leaving a residue and is ideal for anything needing locking fluid.

Next Month

Fingers crossed, the crankcases will have been repaired and returned, ready to fit the crank

Improvised shed-based working at its best: the RD is dangled from the rafters



Chassis shenanigans

Having finally got on top of his **Yamaha RD200DX's** engine, Alex turns his attention to its wayward handling to make the most of glorious autumnal weather

Alex Innocent 1978 Yamaha RD200DX



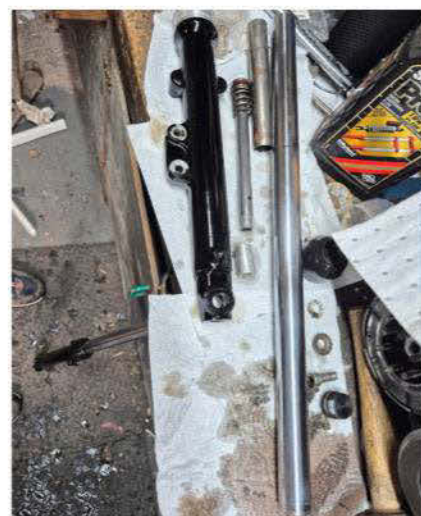
Engineering surveyor and motocross racer Alex bought his modified RD on a whim. Turns out the little '70s two-stroke requires a fair old bit of fettling.

Last month I slipped beer cans over the RD's foam filters to try and work out what main jets would be best. This Stella experiment suggested 158s for the modified two-stroke twin, which has proved to be really close – I'm pleased that the bike finally ends up running rich. Coming down slightly to 152s, I take it down a straight A-road and rev it out, stopping in a layby after a while at full throttle in fourth gear

and take a plug out – it's a lovely mocha coffee brown. Perfect.

Pleased that I'm finally out of seizure territory, I can start thinking about the RD's chassis. The unnerving weave previously reported was traced to a rear tyre that was a) tubeless when it shouldn't have been, and b) under-inflated. Easily sorted – but plenty more needs addressing.

The bike had stood unused for a long time before I bought it, and the fork seals are leaking. With no centrestand, I suspend the bike with a strap between the top yoke and the shed roof, with a trolley jack and piece of wood under the engine to steady it. Forks out, I strip them down – unlike the modern(ish) motocross forks I'm used to, they're a doddle. No bladders, no



Forks in surprisingly good nick after decades of abuse

dual chambers, no air. They come apart easily, so I strip them right down and clean everything.

They're in amazing condition for 47-year-old forks. The stanchions are slightly pitted – but I want to ride the bike while the weather is still good and seals are only £12, so I put them in and hope they don't leak. I reassemble using 10-weight fork oil and raise the level slightly from standard to alleviate the load on the front caused by clip-on 'bars, a weight-forward riding position and my portliness.

I've never been happy with the clip-on position, so make them more tucked in and slightly lower. A quick test ride shows no leaks, a front end sitting satisfyingly a little higher, and a riding position that's kinder on my wrists and looks like an old-school GP bike (in my head, at least).

The front tyre is 3.00 x 18, not the standard 2.75 x 18. Not only slightly wider but also having a taller profile, it's altering the geometry and making the Yam turn in slowly on tangled roads. I also discover a small patch of swollen rubber where the fork oil has been dribbling onto the tyre while the bike is on its side stand. I order a correct-size tyre and get a tube ready (there isn't one at this end, either).

The rear of the bike always feels a bit skittish over small bumps. A few years ago, I built a kit car with a Suzuki GSX-R1000 engine, and I remember that when you have metalastic bushes (steel tube surrounded by rubber, pressed into an outer tube) they should be tightened in the loaded position. So I sit on the RD, loosen the swingarm pivot (it drops a bit), then torque it up as I sit on it. With the new 2.75 front tyre now also fitted, I head out for another

ride – and it feels like a different bike. It steers into corners without effort, even at higher speed, and the rear now squats when exiting a corner and feels planted everywhere, soaking up bumps as it should.

It really is a blast to ride on a twisty A- and B-roads. You need to be on-point with the revs and gearchanges to get the best out of it – and that's why I love riding it. I could get on something bigger or grunter, but the RD is engaging and involving – and at legal speeds, too.

Every time I go out, I write lists of good things and things to improve – and at last the lists seem to stay the same length. I'm still taking spare plugs, plug spanner, screwdrivers, feeler gauges, sandpaper (for the points), two-stroke oil and a measuring tube with me – but now it's all staying in the rucksack, not being deployed in laybys.

There's another engine breakthrough as well – tuning the idle mixture. I inherited a brand-new unused Colortune plug from my grandad back in 1997, so dust off the box and decide to try it. Both plugs at idle show a bright orange flame, which means it's running rich. The air screws have been wound too far in; it seems a previous owner tried to get the idle down for the too-lean main jets the bike had. I back the idle screws right off so the carb

'It feels like a different bike. It steers without effort and feels planted'



Colortune isn't just effective, it has pretty colours too



Slightly pitted stanchions can be sorted over winter

is running on the air jets only, then set each cylinder so it's just off orange and into the lovely blue colour on the Colortune plug. No more issues with starting or fouling.

I have a long list of improvements to make on the Yamaha over the winter months. I'm really enjoying messing with it and getting the most out of it, which is the best thing about having a modified bike. All that can wait for now, though. There's still plenty of golden autumn sunshine to enjoy this year, and with the RD finally running and riding as it should there's a big grin inside my helmet on every outing. And that's what it's all about, isn't it?

Three things...



Torque wrench

I know a lot of people like to 'feel' when things are right, but a torque wrench means it is right. Cheap and continually useful.



30mm socket

This handy lump of metal is the perfect size to use as a fork-seal driver for the Yamaha's slim front end.



Colortune plug

An old-school tool – no good for fuel-injected bikes, but very useful for nailing idle settings on bikes with carburettors.



'It's even still on the original tyres'

Rich's **Dunstall Honda CB750** is a truly eye-catching creation. But after almost two decades languishing, it's time to stop gawping and get it back on the road

Richard Newland **Dunstall Honda CB750**



CB's big boss is a sports bike fan. As well as this Dunstall, he owns a 1986 Suzuki GSX-R750, 1998 Ducati 996, 1998 Honda VFR800F and 2007 Honda SP-2.

Out of sight, out of mind? My CB750 has been hiding in a corner of my garage for 17 years. It sporadically emerges for flurries of pampering that mean it looks almost ready to ride. But it isn't.

The desire for a project led me to this gloriously kitsch-looking piece of 1970s excess in November 2008. Festooned with Paul Dunstall accessories and tuning parts, it's had a big tankslapper at some point and possibly been crashed, and the German road tax sticker suggests it was last on the road in 1981. Yet it's really very tidy. The bodywork is Dunstall Devastator

(the standard K2 tank is underneath) and it came with a Dunstall Decibel 4-2-2 system, Dunstall rearsets and (fake) clip-ons, finned engine covers and a suggestion it's fitted with a 900cc Yoshimura kit (I doubt it).

Where have 17 years gone? Well, many other projects have got in the way – but I've been gradually chipping away at the Dunny, scouring for spares and stockpiling parts (including genuine NOS clip-ons from Ontario, Canada). But the big problem was



Petcock bowl's contents: like barista's leftovers

ignition – or the lack thereof. I sourced an NOS ignition barrel, backplate, points and ignition timing plate, plus a new electronic ignition kit. The loom was a mess too, so I fitted a new one of those. Switchgear wiring was equally badgered and the lefthand switchgear was broken, too.

But what I wanted most of all was to see if the CB would run. Looking in the tank revealed a rust factory, and the petcock bowl looked like it'd been used to filter coffee. With that all cleaned, a tap rebuild kit, new spark plugs, fuel lines and battery, and the ignition set roughly by eye – and a fire extinguisher ready – I hit the starter.

Man, it's loud – CR750 racer loud. After a few minutes offending my wife and most of the neighbours, I switched it off to bathe in the smell of hot oil, warm metal and burnt-off dust and rust. Glorious.

That was June 2015. We're still a long way from roadworthiness. The 'To Do' list

New loom helped sidestep a pit of electrical despair



Original Dunstall clip-on 'bars' were sourced from Canada



Dragged from the garage and onto the bench for the first time in ages

ADAM SHORROCK

'Man, it's loud – CR750 racer loud'

includes new tyres, fabricating a headstock bracket to support the gargantuan fairing and further electrical faff. It also needs a new fuel tank, the forks and caliper rebuilding, the carbs set up, lockstops reinstating... and I need to get it registered. This might be fun, as it came into the UK in the 1980s – and the only paperwork I have is the German registration document.

The riding position is torturous, but after 17 years of it languishing, nothing would make me happier than folding myself in half and piloting it down squiggly tarmac next spring. So now the tinkering really starts. You can follow my 'progress' in coming issues. And if you had a Dunstall back in the day, we'd love to hear from you.

One thing leads to another

Alan Seeley
1972 Norton Commando



These things always start out innocently enough. One minute you're changing the spark plugs, next thing you know you're into a full engine rebuild.

Then it's 'might as well do a complete bank account-emptying restoration...' I haven't gone that far with my 1972 Norton – but a little light recommissioning has quickly become something heavier.

Apparently, we now have something called a motorcycling 'season'. A classic enthusiast friend suggests I might like to ride the Commando to a few shows before the end of this year's 'season'.

Good plan, but some fettling will be required. The carbs will need a good clean and the fuel tank shows signs of rust internally (see page 99 for the fix). The belt on the Mick Hemmings primary drive is well past its sell-by date and the clutch friction plates are very burnt toast. Similarly, the clutch hub, running dry with the belt set-up, has become notched.

So far, so routine. But when it comes to

adjusting the gearbox to tension the belt, I notice that the swingarm tab for the front chainguard bolt has disappeared. My great welder mate, Kyle O'Dell, says he'll be happy to sort it, but the task will be easier if the swingarm is off the bike.

Easier for Kyle, yes. But swingarm extraction requires blowlamps, hammers and punches deployed in ways too graphic to show here. Things escalate into a rear-end stripdown. As they do.

Anyhow, remedial works are now well underway – and the Commando and I should be ready for next 'season'.



All this just to attach the chainguard properly

The satisfaction of a good bodge

Mike Armitage
1990 Yamaha TDR250



In my cluttered garage are TDR250 essentials. A few bottles of Motul two-stroke oil. A funnel and handy rags for when filling the oil tank via the daft horizontal neck. And a tin of BBQ paint.

There are several small things that I'd like to fix on the two-stroke twin. They're the sort of do-when-I-can jobs that we all enjoy as additional reasons to nip to the garage, muse, tinker and sip tea.

The list includes finding a WR125 master cylinder to improve the front

brakes and remedying the dribbling gearbox output shaft seal (unless it's the gearchange shaft – it's so oily I can't tell). But there's one relationship-building fettle that happens frequently: repainting the exhausts.

TDR pipes enjoyed shedding the black finish when new – and after 35 years, the curly expansion chambers are even keener to be bare. And then to rust. A long-lasting job involves removing them, proper surface preparation and a quality finish – but taking them off is fiddly and I'm impatient, so I brush them with paint for wood-burning stoves and BBQs. Ten minutes sanding off flaky bits, ten minutes with a thin brush, and I'm good to go.

Is it a bodge? Yes. And that's fine. The dictionary says 'bodge' means to make a mess or do something clumsily, but I'd argue it's simply an alternative way of doing something to provide a nice swift fix. And there's no reason why a decent bodge can't be a sound and satisfying solution.

Of course, the Yam's pipes don't get hot enough to fully cure the high-heat BBQ paint. So it flakes off every couple of years. But we'll gloss over that (again).



Ready to accept some Lincolnshire sausages



Unexpectedly good

John Westlake fails to fix his **Suzuki DR250**, but attempts the Edinburgh Trial anyway

John Westlake 1986 Suzuki DR250



John's broken all his rules and bought a French-registered trail bike unseen. A bit of fettling has got it useable, but it really needs more tweaks to take on a big event. Oh well...

To complete the Edinburgh Trial on an old motorcycle, I was under the impression you need it to be in the finest possible fettle. Nineteen trials sections combined with nearly 200 miles of nadgery road riding in the Peaks (not Edinburgh: long story) is not to be sniffed at, after all.

So I compile a list of urgent jobs: replace brake pads; change fork oil; replace head bearings; check and maybe replace valve stem seals (it smokes on start-up); replace rear drum shoes; change chain and sprockets. Then life takes over and I complete none of them. Not a bean.

With days to go, I call local mechanical sage Rupert Farnsworth and beg him to sort the head bearings. I reason that it's a Suzuki, so the engine will probably keep going and the brakes surely have 200 miles left in them – but if I can't point the DR in the right direction, I'm stuffed.

Rupe strips the front end and finds the steering stem has taper bearings at the bottom, but a ball race at the top – unlike the replacements he's got. With no time to

order more, he greases everything, puts it back together and I test it the night before the trial. The DR steers better, apart from at full lock where it tightens up. It'll do.

In fact, it does remarkably well. My start time is 11.27pm and the DR chugs happily through the night, pausing only to canter up a selection of trials sections that seem far easier than they did last year thanks to a merciful lack of rain. But I know this is just the *amuse-bouche* – the properly tricky sections are saved until daylight.

Yet, unbelievably, the DR and I continue to potter up everything. One section called The Corkscrew sends us ricocheting off course up a bank, but by then I'm too sleep-deprived to tense up and the DR calmly steers itself back down again. The results aren't out yet, so it might prove to be a cruel hallucination – but over 19 sections I don't think I dabbed once. I might even get a medal...



Trial riding at night. Perfect classic bike territory

Andy Est. 1972 Tiernan

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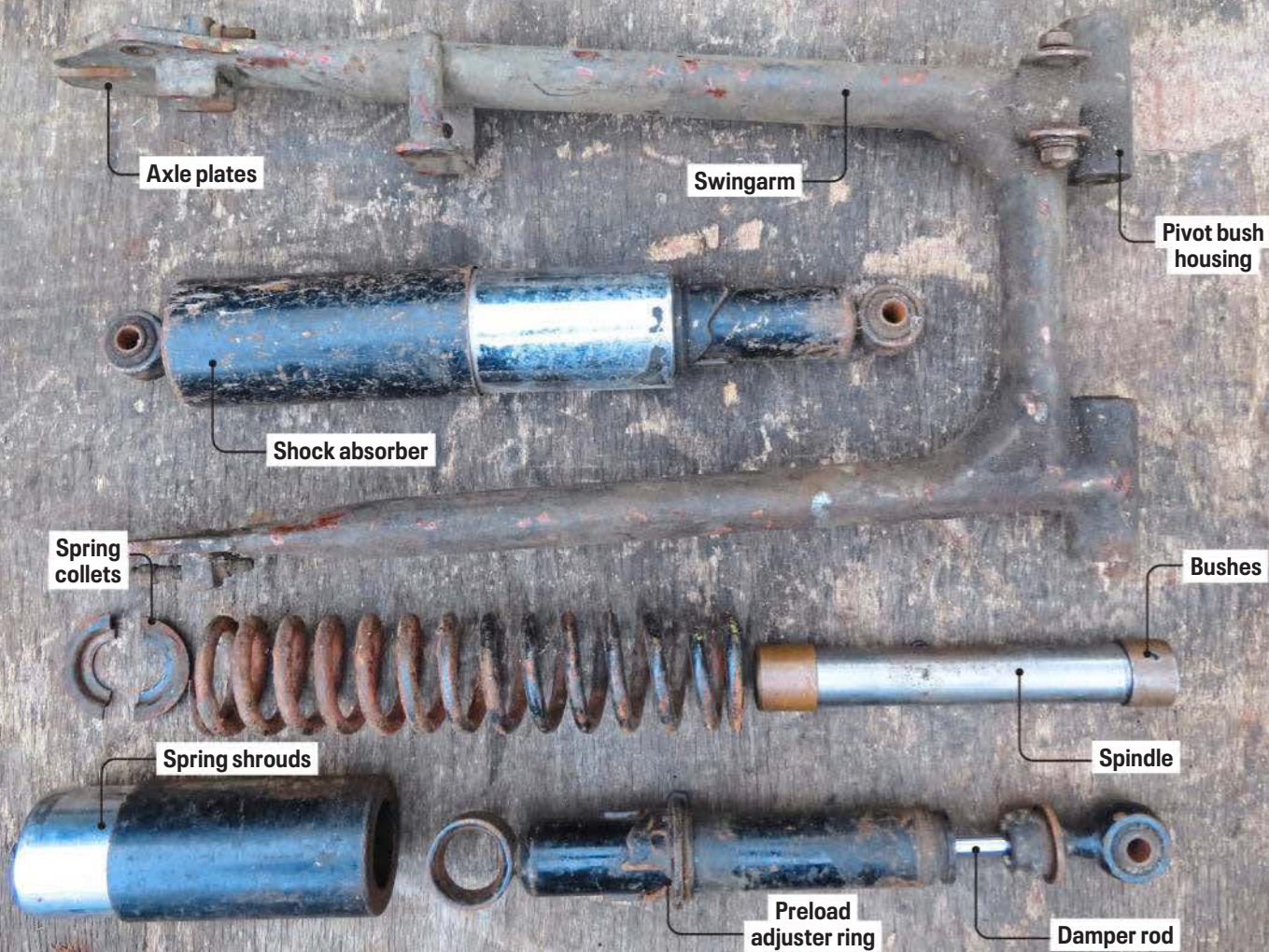


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GREATMAGAZINES



Rear suspension

Classic bike rear suspension can have a little more complexity than modern set-ups. Here's what you need to know to keep things going up and down, not side to side...

Rick Parkington



In the '60s, my dad got a Triumph 500 for a fiver because it was 'a deathtrap' – but after replacing worn swingarm bushes it was fine. Here's what he knew but the seller didn't...

Rear suspension didn't take off until the 1950s – the absence of fluid and sealing technology for proper damping had limited its benefit until then. It was treated with suspicion by riders, adding weight, weakness and wear-prone complexity to the sturdy frames braced for the harsh roads of the day. It also deleted the ideal rear locating point for a sidecar fitting.

That's why 'plunger' springing became the first widely adopted system. The rear axle lugs were separated from the frame and

contained within various forms of spring box, giving a rigid-look frame with a small amount of undamped vertical movement. Usually decried as a budget solution to use up existing rigid frame stock, plunger frames were in fact complete redesigns.

Only Triumph managed to spring their rigid frame, with their 'sprung hub' – a device whereby the axle went up and down inside a spring box contained within the large wheel hub. It took the worst out of the road, as plungers did, but the future lay in the pivoted fork (or 'swingarm'). These had been pioneered by privateers who equipped 1930s race bikes with garden shed conversions. The McCandless conversion was one, from the brothers who later designed the Featherbed frame. Companies like Enfield and Matchless were among

the first to fit swingarm suspension; it became universal around 1955.

Keeping the wheel vertical is essential and demands that the pivot and arms of the swingarm are stiff enough to rise together. Inadequate pivot support for hard riding earned '50s Triumphs a poor reputation, but bush wear from poor maintenance made even everyday riding dangerous.

The need for regular greasing where bronze bushes are fitted cannot be overstated; nipples are provided, so grease them every service, because replacement is a big job. Prevention is better than cure.

And don't put off replacing a leaky rear shock. The twist imposed by having damping on one side only will soon wear out the swingarm bushes.

• **Next month:** Clocks and gauges



Give it a good wiggle

Check for bush play by bridging the fork (swingarm) and frame with a finger while pulling the wheel side-to-side. Any movement is too much – but make sure it's not just end-float; it may only need shims.



Pump out old grease

Greasing is not just lubrication. Like oil, it cushions impact – and pumping new grease in helps force back out road dirt and moisture that are creeping in. Look how filthy this old grease has become.



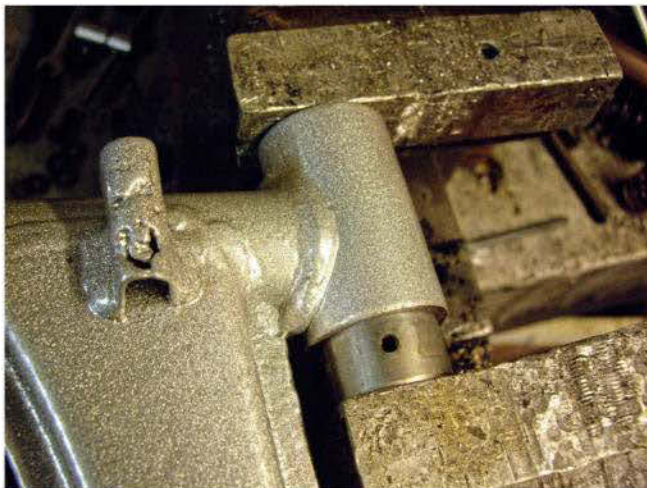
Perished bushes

Some forks – like BSA and Norton (shown) – have metal/rubber bushes that may have movement. It should only be slight and it should take effort; sloppiness means the rubber's perished and needs replacing.



Out with the old...

These bushes usually separate when you press them out, leaving the outer sleeve corroded in the swingarm. Cut through one side with a hacksaw blade and collapse them inward with a punch to remove.



...in with the new

Bronze bushes resist corrosion, but they're soft; press-fit them in a vice using soft jaws (don't hammer) or pull them into place (and push the old ones out) using a bolt, washers and spacers or sockets.



Ground away

Don't just buy bushes, get a spindle, too. The hard steel usually wears worse than the soft bushes – partly because it rusts, but also because grit embeds in the softer bronze and turns it into a grindstone.



Accuracy matters

Being a press fit, bronze bushes may close up and need reaming. They usually need a piloted reamer, so the bores are perfectly aligned to accept the push through the spindle with the minimum removed.



Stiffened up

1971-on Triumph and BSA twins have longer sleeves and two bushes each side. The extra width adds rigidity, but the centre bolt must be tight to clamp the sleeves; moving with the swingarm damages the frame.



Upside-down?

Coiling gas shocks of the early '80s fit upside-down to separate the anti-foaming gas from the damping oil. They're identifiable by part number. They also had a thicker (7/16in, not 3/8in) damper rod.



End float

1960s Triumphs dodged minor alignment issues by giving both bushes their own sleeves with individual spindles for either side, secured by a central bolt with end-float set by washers and a centre spacer.



Cover-up job

Shrouds, fitted as standard up until the late '60s, make the shocks last longer. Even just keeping the top one helps, so don't be in too much hurry to discard them in favour of open springs.

In the toolbox

A grease gun is vitally important, but for adjustment it's worth keeping an eye open for one of these old hinged C-spanners. Being adjustable, they fit a wider variety of shocks. Have a nose for one at jumbles and boot fairs.



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Fuel tank electrolysis

Rust accumulation inside the fuel tank is a problem on bikes that aren't used very often or that have stood idle for a while. Thankfully, with a little bit of applied science, fixing the issue is a pleasingly labour-free process

Alan Seeley



"Once you've managed to get your tank rust-free and dry, prevent flash rust by spraying some rust inhibitor into it."



1 The problem

This Norton Commando steel fuel tank has stood for a year or two, with just a couple of litres of fuel in it. In the meantime, rust – which, as Neil Young told us, never sleeps – has been busy colonising the inside of the tank. This has doubtless been exacerbated by the hygroscopic nature of the petrol's ethanol content, pulling moisture out of the air. Remedial action is plainly required before the bike can be recommissioned.



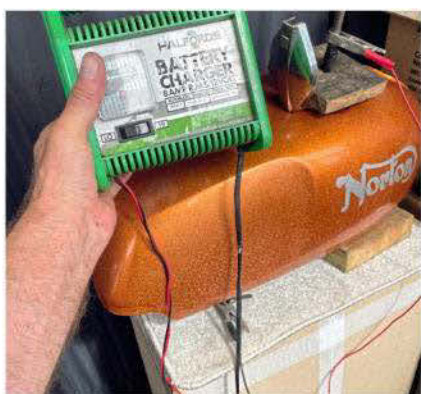
2 Dash of soda

Once you've emptied the stale fuel from the tank, given the inside a bit of a sluice in the parts washer and left it to dry, washing soda is added to the tank. You can buy this at many supermarkets and hardware shops. The process requires around a tablespoon of washing soda per gallon of tank capacity. Either mix with a little water then pour into the tank, or simply add the washing soda then fill the tank with water.



3 Making sacrifices

Electrolysis requires a so-called 'sacrificial anode' – a piece of steel or stainless steel. It must be mounted so that it cannot contact the steel of the tank. In this case, a small piece of wood is drilled to accept the 6mm tube we are using as the anode. A wrap of gaffer tape stops it sliding too far through the hole. Or you might use a couple of old rubber gloves cable-tied around the anode to form a makeshift bung.



4 Get connected

Now we're ready to make the science happen. With the anode (steel tube, +ve) suspended in the electrolyte (washing soda solution), a battery charger is connected with the positive clip on the anode and the negative clip on the tank itself. This makes the tank the cathode (-ve) part of the circuit. With the battery charger plugged in after making the connections, the magic can commence. Welcome to the wonderful world of electrolysis.



5 Rust on the run

Electrolysis sees the exchange of ions between anode and cathode. Rust forming on the anode shows this is happening. Ions travelling from the anode via the electrolyte convert red rust on the inside of the tank (the cathode) to black ferrous oxide. This ferrous oxide will mostly fall off the inner surface of the tank, alternatively, it can be easily washed out or blasted off with compressed air. Reckon on 10-12 hours of electrolysis to sort a fairly rusty tank.

In the toolbox

Battery charger (nothing fancy, just a power supply), cheap washing soda, sacrificial anode, support for sacrificial anode. And a strip of sticky gaffer tape.

Nice to have

Parts washer for swilling the tank before and after electrolysis. Maybe a compressor air gun. Oh, and fuel without water in it...



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1958, Blue/Black, matching numbers, fully refurbished 3 years ago and placed in my private collection, new wheels, tyres, exhausts, silencers, seat etc, Pazon ignition, photos available, V5C, free delivery. £4950 Yorkshire, tel:01723372219



BMW R100

1992, 64000 miles, 11 months MoT, large history file including original handbook, owned since 2017, selling as IOM 75 and finding it heavy to move around. £3250 East Sussex, tel:07908087543



BMW R80

1978, 66000 miles, Serviced, many new parts including starter motor, brake pads, seat and silencers, good runner. £2500 Bristol, tel:07960874115



BSA A7

1958, 63127 miles, Fully working, spent a lot on her over the years. Excellent runner and in good condition. Delivery available, V5C present. £5499 Holmfirth, tel:07703474600



BSA B33

1967, Bit of money spent, forks, shocks, tyres etc, starts 1st/2nd kick, need space. £2800 Glasgow, tel:07511619810



ARIEL 350

1959, 3300 miles, Show condition/excellent, fully rebuilt machine, last year of the Magneto Four Strokes. £2950 Essex, tel:07395057343



BMW R100 RS

1977, 66000 miles, Historic status, no road tax or MoT required. Well maintained, has been looked after. It has regularly been used during time of ownership for commuting etc. Has recently had new tyres front and back. £4500 Wiltshire, tel:01747840359



BSA A10

1959, Red/Black with chrome mudguards, twin clocks, rack, T/L/S, front brake, Avons, photos available, V5C, from my private collection, free delivery. £6950 Yorkshire, tel:01723372219



BSA A7

1958, 63127 miles, Fully working, spent a lot on her over the years. Excellent runner and in good condition. Delivery available. V5C present. £5499 West Yorkshire, tel:07703474600



BSA BANTAM

1964, BSA Bantam Trials, electric ignition, alloy wheels, 185cc, contact for further information. £2600 Bridlington, tel:07816561852



ARIEL 350

1959, 3300 miles, Show condition/excellent, fully rebuilt machine, last year of the Magneto Four Strokes. £2950 Essex, tel:07395057344



BMW R100 S

1980, 36000 miles, 4 owners from new, unrestored, in good original condition, stored for last 9 years, 36K miles. New battery, needs some recommissioning. £2500 Fife, tel:07810595950



BSA A65

1970, 18400 miles, Blue, matching numbers, good compression, twin L/S front brake, new petrol taps/pipe, was running before laid up 3 and half years ago, turned over regularly. £2700 Yorkshire, tel:07913032864



BSA B SERIES

1969, 9500 miles, With matching numbers, has done 9500 miles since a full engine rebuild, end feed roller conversion, electronic ignition 20 years ownership, VGC. £4500 Uk, tel:01766770648



BSA GOLDSTAR

1955, 2000 miles, CB34 Mikuni carb, Newby clutch, belt drive, BTH magneto, RRT gearbox, spares included, GP carb crank, magneto std gearbox. £10500 Bolton, tel:07883721057



ARMSTRONG MT500

1986, Fitted with 604E engine, nice condition, recent stainless exhaust and Falcon shocks, original panniers, Military history and manuals. £3500, single bike trailer also available. £3500 Uk, tel:07557018930



BMW R100 S

1977, Metallic Orange, painted, powder coated, wheels rebuilt, SS spokes, forks rebuilt, carbs rebuilt, top end dismantled and inspected, very good cylinder pressures, electric ignition, starts well. £0 Surrey, tel:07585230726



BSA A65

1962, One off custom, 1962 reg, fitted with 1967 big valve Hornet engine. Boyer ignition, new Amal premier carbs. Starts easily, runs perfectly, excellent front brake set up by SRM. £4750 South Somerset, tel:07989030387



BSA B31

1959, Green, maintained in immaculate condition, fair weather use only, kept in dry garage, 18 years the present owner but now too old to ride it. £5000 Hampshire, tel:01962734696



BSA GOLDSTAR

1955, Engine and frame numbers match, touring trim as confirmed in dispatch book and engine brake test sheet, belt primary, Mikuni carb standard gearbox 12V. £7250 Dorset, tel:07414289472

**BULTACO FRONTERA**

1980, Fully restored, rebored piston, rebuilt crankshaft, all bearings and seals replaced, new alloy tank. £4500 Lincolnshire, tel:07970933626

**HONDA 125**

1982, 15000 miles, Good original condition, tax/MoT exempt, same owner for many years, nice example. £1595 Devon, tel:07775618803

**HONDA XL200**

1985, 10000 miles, Used regularly, Italian import, new Hagon shock, tyres. £1950 UK, tel:07855508303

**MAGNI BMW MB1**

1980, Low mileage, unused for several years, no reasonable offer refused. UK, tel: 07833906288

**NORTON COMMANDO**

1974, 25000 miles, Very nice condition, starts well, selling for £6,000, please call for further information. £6000 Reading, tel:07758732001

**CYCLEMASTER 32CC**

1951, Cyclemaster 32cc, new rebuilt wheel and new drive chain, currently not running due to no spark, all complete with log book. £400 Waltham Abbey, tel:07922043121

**HONDA C70**

1983, 6223 miles, In vgc, genuine mileage from new, 3 speed g/box, carrier/pannier bags, original service book/owners manual, keys, original tool kit, 1 owner from new, SORN, ono, bodywork never been restored. £2500 Manchester, tel:01204578543

**KAWASAKI KH125**

1975, 706 miles, Kawasaki KH100 - 1975 N Reg. 706 miles. MoT and tax exempt. Runner. Good condition. Rare. Great restoration project. Further information contact Dave Carshalton, SM1, 07739 800478. £2750 Surrey, tel:07958342129

**MOTO GUZZI 125**

1975, Running, new tyres, inner tubes, easy project. £1600 West Yorkshire, tel:01484663007

**NORTON COMMANDO**

1972, Matching numbers, 8 leading shoe front brake. Needs work as been stored, 2 owners from new with V5C. £2750 Gloucestershire, tel:07971631685

**DAUCATI 900 SS**

1994, 30986 miles, Recent 12 months MoT, V5 present, some of the recent work completed, full service, front and rear brakes fully serviced, excellent condition, new cambelts fitted by Moto-R specialist in Ruthin. £3750 Liverpool, tel:01512901512

**HONDA C70**

1973, 7730 miles, In very good condition, Blue, 1 owner from new, genuine mileage, carrier/pannier bags, service book, owners manual, keys, complete with new exhaust in box, SORN, never been restored. £2500 Manchester, tel:01204578543

**KAWASAKI Z750**

1994, 47246 miles, Finished in Pearl White., my Wifes bike, 10 months MoT, runs well, lovely gearbox, 20,000 miles on replacement engine, all round good condition, open to sensible offers. £2500 South Wales, tel:01495775400

**MOTO GUZZI LE MANS**

1980, 92000 miles, 950cc conversion. Red/Black. 92K miles, very original, in used condition. Owned since 2005. Delinked brakes, stainless exhaust and rack. Some spares included. ONO. £7000 Dundee, tel:07935594148

**NSU QUICKLY**

1956, Not NSU but Sachs 2 stroke powered Patria WKC 50 moped, very rare, apparently only available in UK during 1956, starts and runs, lights working, petrol tank needs attention, hence project. £600 Staffordshire, tel:07877536948

**DAUCATI 900SS MHR**

1980, 22600 miles, Family owned since new, recent overhaul including carburettors, new chrome throughout, new exhausts and conti silencers, new tyres, excellent condition, original paintwork, injury forces sale. £15900 Bolton, tel:07947648198

**HONDA CB400**

1981, 29800 miles, Ongoing project which still needs work to complete, bike is in bits, including engine, needs rebuilding and paint on wheels and bodywork. Too many new parts to list. £1050 Caerphilly, tel:07890331904

**LAMBRETTA SX**

1966, 350 miles, Built in 2011 by Classic Lambrettas Nottingham, Rapido 225 engine, 350 miles in last 14 years. Transferable number plate. V5 in my name. Side panels in Purple colour, very clean starts, runs well. £4250 Kent, tel:01843832899

**MOTO GUZZI LE MANS MK2**

1981, Special edition, low mileage, unused for several years, sensible offers welcome. UK, tel: 07833906288

**RALEIGH RUNABOUT**

1964, Raleigh Runabout in running order. £1200 Bridlington, tel:07816561852

**HARLEY DAVIDSON 1340 EVO**

1995, 31000 miles, Excellent condition, all original engine and frame numbers, complete with original leather Panniers and screen, price ono. £5500 Leics, tel:07472451935

**HONDA EXPRESS**

1980, Barn find, x2, 1 runs. Both V5, spares or repair, 1980 or 1982, £875 both. £875 Scottish Borders, tel:07870505716

**LAMBRETTA SX**

1967, 384 miles, In White with Ruby Red side panels, fully frame up restoration with a rebuilt TV200 engine, 384 miles only since the restoration, previous owner 55 years, this is concourse, mint condition, perfect. £9850 West Midlands, tel:0759342385

**MOTO MORINI 500**

1982, Properly recommissioned, new fork seals, new Hagons. Serviced, with new cambelt, new plugs, air filters, carbs sonic cleaned/rebuilt/balanced, new fuel pipes. Screen added. £0 Surrey, tel:07585230726

**RALEIGH WISP**

1967, Raleigh Wisp, barn find, 1967, comes with tank and side panel so all complete but obviously needs restoring. £850 West Yorkshire, tel:07734001989

**HARLEY DAVIDSON WLC**

1942, In excellent restored condition, rebuilt engine by Damien Eggs. Very original with good history, rare reverse gear, reducing collection. £20500 Middlessex, tel:07798866071

**HONDA TL125**

1974, Running order. £650 Bridlington, tel:07816561852

**LAVERDA 1000 3CL**

1977, Excellent all round conditions, runs and rides superbly. Ket. tel: 07818471980

**NORTON COMMANDO**

1971, Belt drive primary, started life as a high rider I have all the parts to be put back to that again if wanted. £5250 Kent, tel:07769652405

**SACHS LEOPARD**

1975, 5000 miles, Sachs moped, not leopard, 1970s, good original condition easy starter, everything works, rare bike, no documents, £575 Devon, tel:07775618803

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BSA

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TRIUMPH T140E

1979, Loads of work to engine and cycle, some mods but original parts and many others included, a good runner and reliable, matching numbers, price ono. £4000 Sheffield, tel:07788196444



TRIUMPH TIGER CUB

1961, 22000 miles, Original and unrestored, matching engine and frame numbers, owned by me for over 50 years, V5C and original Buff log book, used as daily transport from 1975 to 1978, garage stored, started regularly. £2495 York, tel:07831109961



YAMAHA XS750

1979, Good runner, has many stainless steel fasteners, metallic Black tank and side panels, good tyres, braided hoses on front, electronic ignition and adjustable forks as standard, offers. £1350 Essex, tel:01708782364



SCOTT FLYING SQUIRREL

1928, Banbury run eligible and completed it in 2024 without issue, used on many VMCC runs of - 100 miles trouble free, currently fitted with a modern carb and radiator, ready to ride. £7500 Lincoln, tel:07972260649



TRIUMPH BONNEVILLE

1968, 2865 miles, Matching numbers, registered historic vehicle, Triumph owners club dating certificate, beautifully restored. 2,865 miles since rebuild. Complete with original Triumph owner's manual. £7500 Devon, tel:07469987385



TRIUMPH T150

1972, 750cc, 3 cylinder, 4 speed box, electronic ignition and rectifier, LED head and tail lights, pretty condition, starts runs and stops. IRO. £4500 Teeside, tel:07504106120



TRIUMPH TR6

1981, Red/Black, matching numbers, 650cc twin, Siamese exhaust, new 12V battery, new rear Avon, twin clocks, running well, photos available, V5C, previous longterm ownership, free delivery arranged. £4950 Yorkshire, tel:01723372219



YAMAHA XT

1988, 26800 miles, Imported from Germany, registered in the UK since 1997. V5 in my name. 26,800 miles. Sold as a project, engine not seized up. £1750 Surrey, tel:07947577026



SCOTT FLYING SQUIRREL

1927, 2 speed, just had a full engine rebuild, new 600 top end by Roger Moss, reground bottom end and new bearings by Kevin Bayliss, only ridden 2/3 miles since, will need running in and final setting up. £7500 Lincoln, tel:07972260649



TRIUMPH SPEED

1956, Pre unit, easy starter, runs and rides as it should, 12v conversion, new chain, clutch rebuilt. Matching numbers, V5c and buff log book present, not concours but far better than oily rag condition. £5750 Norfolk, tel:07876704268



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1976, 21000 miles, Owned by me 44 years, stainless mudguards, good wheels and paint, everything works as it should, 2 previous owners, good condition. £3750 Perthshire, tel:01828627716



VELOCETTE VENOM

1960, 21500 miles, 1960 Velocette Venom, in good condition been dry stored for 10 years but lubricated and engine regularly turned over by the elderly retired marine engineer. Has been started and run ready for sale. £3900 Pembrokeshire, tel:01646685714



YAMAHA YB100

1980, 4900 miles, Original Gambier Reeks number plate, runs and rides great, totally original with great patina, original toolkit, one previous owner. £2200 Sunbury On Thames, tel:07774141804



SUN CYCLONE

1955, Lovely little Sun Motorcycle 98cc Villiers 2 stroke engine with 2 speed gearbox, runs and rides well with working lighting equipment, well restored with original registration. £1650 Staffordshire, tel:07877536948



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1961, Immaculate Black and Cream paintwork, matching numbers, new Devon rims, recent tyres, new seat, controls etc. many receipts. Current V5C, stunning 500cc classic. Free delivery arranged. £5950 Yorkshire, tel:01723372219



TRIUMPH TIGER 100

1956, Sidecar outfit, completely restored, no expense spared. £6800 Essex, tel:07852743535



YAMAHA FZR750

1989, Superb runner, last used 25 years ago. Partly assembled hence price, ONO. £3000 London, tel:07519271966



ZUNDAPP MOPED

1956, Please see full description as not Zundapp but rare Patria moped. Build year approx 1956. Sachs 47CC, 2 speed, interesting history, imported by Currys of Croydon. Starts and runs but requires work. £550 Staffordshire, tel:07877536948



SUZUKI 50

1976, 9044 miles, In Blue, very good original condition, starts and runs well, a fantastic example, brought into the UK by a collector in 2018 from Japan and never used, looks like new. £4900 Bristol, tel:07968710710



SUZUKI GS550

1978, Nice condition, well maintained, easy starter, sweet engine. Paint, chrome, tyres all good, new battery. £18000 Cornwall, tel:01637871618

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FLYING JACKET

Leather sheepskin Brown flying jacket, very heavy large to extra large, as new £450 cost over £1200. Tel: 07448733603 East London

CLASSIC RACER FULL FAIRING AND SCREEN

No damage or repairs, 10" opening. May like respray £50. Dunstall fibreglass tank & seat, Yellow £60. Tel: 07702019942 UK

L-plates to FZR

Yellow Pages, M&P catalogues and dealing with cash-on-delivery parts services are what occupied the majority of my early motorcycling days. All so I could tweak and tune two-strokes from 50cc to 100 and 125cc – porting barrels, flowing reed blocks and upgrading exhausts to make my bike the fastest. Then trying desperately to break triple-figure top speeds... but never quite making it.

This direction changed when I read an article in *Performance Bikes* magazine about how the government was changing the motorbike test. It was going to become less straightforward, with two-stage testing and talk of restricted bikes for the first few years of owning a licence.

I needed to get a full licence quick, so booked a four-day crash course. With my test passed, it was time to find something to replace my Suzuki RG125.

Matt Dexter, a mate from Loughborough, knew of a 1987 Yamaha FZR1000 that was for sale, so I arranged a viewing. When I saw the red and white Loctite racing livery, it was a done deal. The battery was flat, the exhaust was blowing and it had to be bump started, but I wasn't bothered – it just looked fast.

With fluids and battery changed, and a

NATHAN SIMPKIN



Loctite-liveried FZR with lights taped and wadding wedged in the loud pipe, ready for its first trackday

Scorpion exhaust fitted, it sounded mint. The first run out blew my mind – those triple figures were a doddle to achieve. Getting used to 120bhp on a massive bike meant cornering was not a doddle, however – my ambition clearly outweighed my talent. I was getting corners very wrong on many occasions. Compared to the RG125, it felt like I was navigating a barge. Most of my other mates had nimbler 600s, and I was playing catch-up on the straights.

Donington Park was right on my doorstep and *Performance Bikes* were running evening track sessions, so I booked on with my mate Mike on his Kawasaki ZZ-R600 so we could try to hone our cornering skills. A one-piece leather suit was a requirement, so a set of Frank

Thomas was purchased from the bargain bin at the BMF Show in Peterborough. At under £100, I didn't care that they were oversized, yellow and made me look like a 6ft 5in Bananaman as long as they got me on the track.

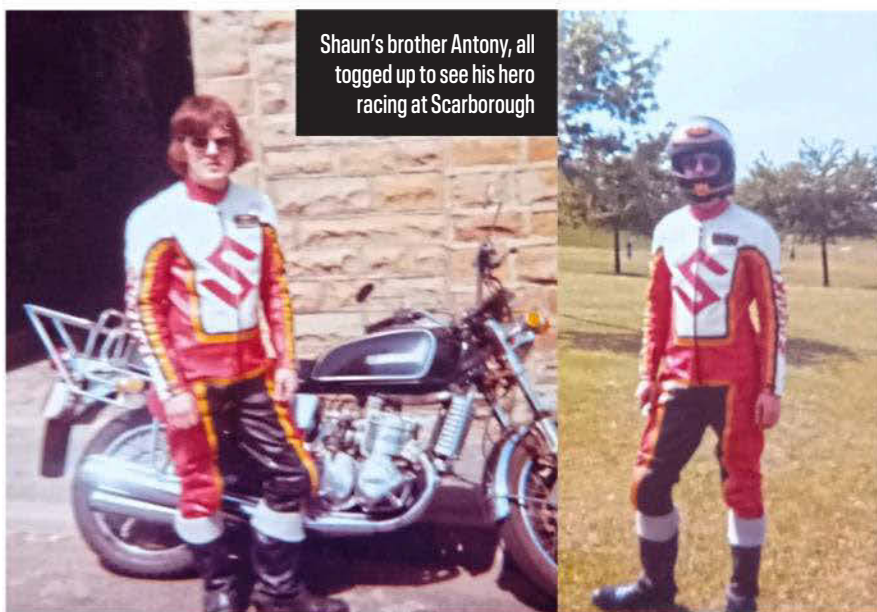
With electrical tape on the lights and bikes checked, we were allowed on track after the riders' briefing. A few laps in, confidence slowly growing, I was exiting the Old Hairpin and just tipping into the left at Starkey's when I got the fright of my life – a 250cc race bike piloted by the late, great Ronnie Smith came underneath me like I was stationary.

He was gone and out of sight before I realised what had happened. I could learn from the moment, though. I increased pace, started to trust the bike more, adopt a better body position and relax. Progress was being made, with confidence ever growing, as I took the blind rise into Coppice Corner... and ran straight into the gravel trap.

The barge got me through with a handful of fuel, engine bouncing off the limiter. I couldn't stop laughing. Back in the pits, Mike told me he'd been behind me and witnessed bright yellow Bananaman on his red and white FZR1000 flying through the gravel. He found it equally funny.

Nathan Simpkin

SHAUN ARMITAGE



Shaun's brother Antony, all toggled up to see his hero racing at Scarborough

Brotherly love

This is my brother Antony Armitage in around 1977 on his way to see Barry Sheene at Scarborough. Our biking life began as children – with him, my brother Christopher and myself in a sidecar, mum on pillion and dad driving. Later, Chris and Ant had Yamaha Fizzies, then Suzuki GT250s. Ant went on to a GT750 and later a GS1000 after his 250, while Chris followed his up with a KH500, GT380, GT550, Triumph Bonneville, RD400... and then a Reliant Robin! I remember their gang meeting outside our house before going on rideouts to race meetings – Sheene and Mick Grant were favourites – or just to a pub. They also introduced me to heavy and LOUD music!

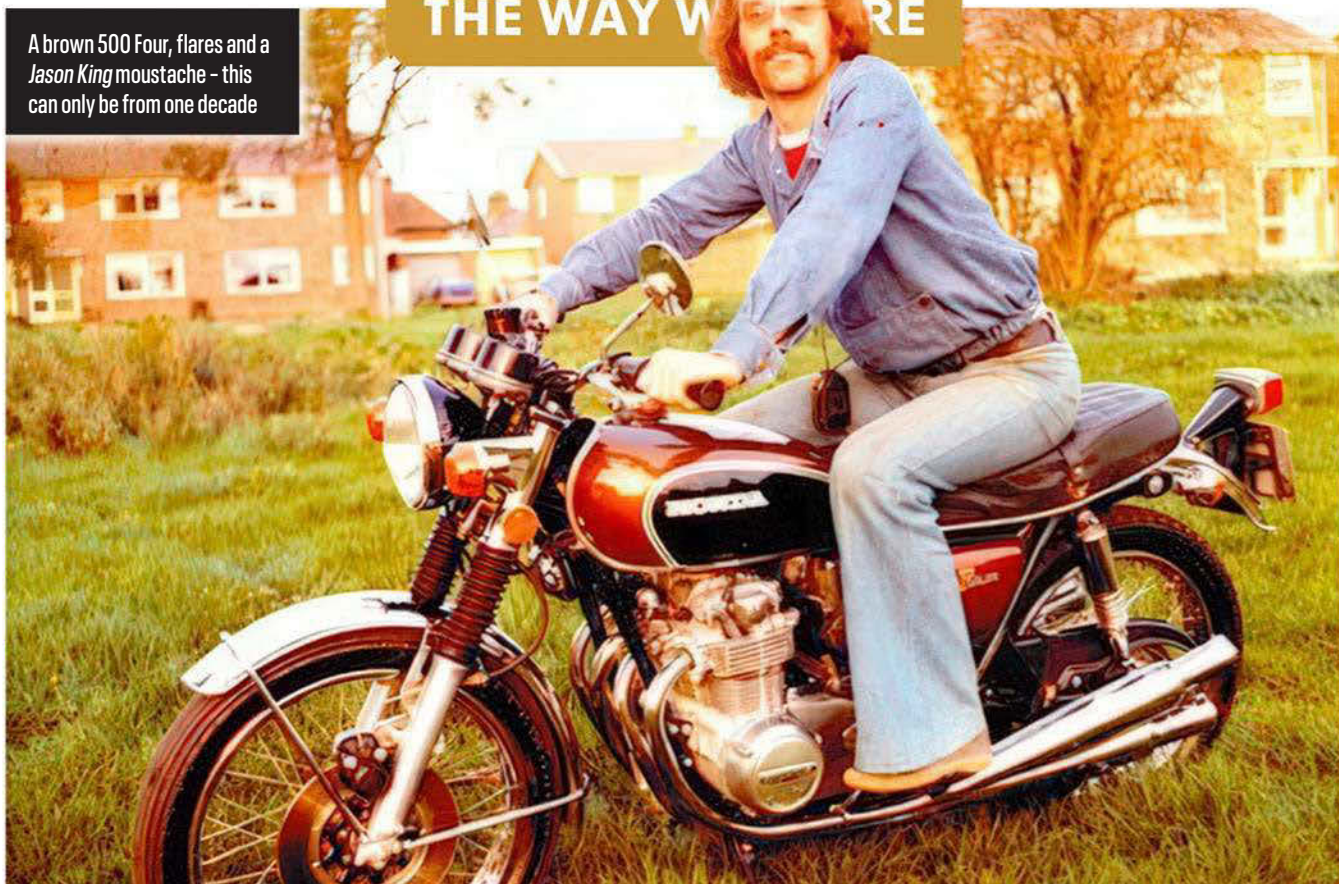
Shaun Armitage

SHOW US YOUR PHOTOS

Got a photo from back in the day of you showing off your bike? Tell us the story behind it... who you are with, when and where it was taken, and – most importantly – what are your memories of the bike(s) pictured? Share it with CB readers by sending a decent-quality scanned image by email to the address: classic.bike@bauermedia.co.uk

A brown 500 Four, flares and a Jason King moustache - this can only be from one decade

Classic Bike THE WAY WE RODE



Super style of the '70s

Designer Malcolm Bates had his finger on the pulse of what was hip for the trip

Hard to believe today, but back in the 1970s one of the smartest 'in' colours for a new car was brown. At the time, my job was designing sales brochures for a dustcart and forklift truck manufacturer called Shelvoke & Drewry in Letchworth (while I modestly waited for a call from Enzo Ferrari inviting me to design new Ferraris, you understand). As a young graphic designer and technical illustrator, I considered myself pretty clued-up with the latest design trends in the automotive world and a special feature in the *Daily Telegraph Magazine* at the time confirmed it – brown was the new black.

Aside from exotic cars and girls, motorcycles were a major talking point among my male friends and flatmates – especially the latest new models. Not wishing to be left out of a crowd running the likes of new Honda 400 Fours and Norton Commandos, I decided to exchange my much-loved Honda 185 trail bike for something with a bit more street cred. At the time, a Honda 500 Four seemed like the perfect choice.

Why? Because it came in brown, naturally.

This picture shows me proudly posing on the day I bought it. Clearly the purchase of more appropriate motorcycling gear was

next on the list. As a bike-mad teenager, I could never afford a proper black leather jacket. But then, years later, prior to getting the 500 Four, most of my motorcycling was either off-road or covered in mud coming home from off-roading, so a Belstaff was more practical. But with a group trip to the Isle of Man TT with me on the 500 Four coming up? It was clearly time to invest in some 'style'...

Honda had recently introduced a whole new range of 'branded' racing leathers and the brochure featured the very thing – a matching leather jacket and zip-together leather jeans in mushy pea green, with a dash of primrose yellow – and, if my memory serves me right, light brown. Nice. They would complement the colour of the 500 Four perfectly.

Sadly, when I went cash-in-hand to the nearest Honda dealer – Morgan Del Basso's in Hitchin – they didn't have them in stock yet, so I had to go 'back to black' for the trip. As we now know, brown never has made a comeback as a fashionable colour for new cars – or indeed bikes – so thank god I never got those expensive Honda leathers. They would soon have been as out of date as my flared denims and Jason King moustache!

Malcolm Bates

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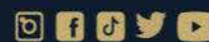
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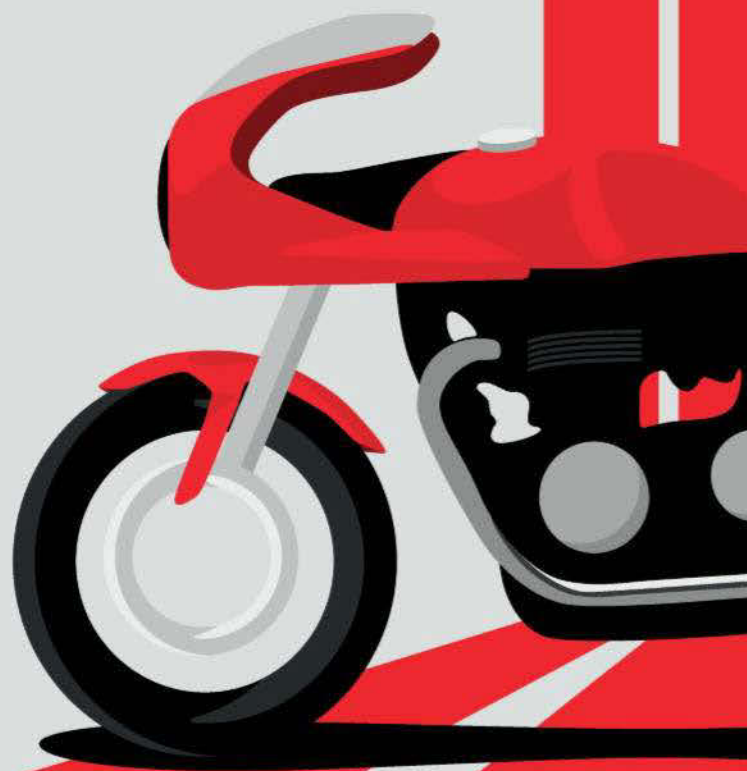
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